

HOW THE UNITED STATES CAN REINFORCE INDIA AS A
COUNTERBALANCE TO CHINA IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
REGION FROM A MILITARY STANDPOINT

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Strategic Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

HOW THE UNITED STATES CAN REINFORCE INDIA AS A COUNTERBALANCE TO CHINA IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION FROM A MILITARY STANDPOINT
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Security of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is of vital geo-strategic and geo-economic importance to the world. China is gradually seeking to control the region. Although the United States must act to balance China's actions, it cannot do so alone, and India is its most natural partner in the region. This study analyzes how the United States can influence the rebalancing of power in the region by answering the primary research question, "Given that India represents a counterbalance to China in the IOR, how can the United States reinforce that counterbalance from a military standpoint?" Offering recommendations for this question required an understanding of the United States' strategic intentions in the region and the military situation in the region. A qualitative analysis of China's and India's military capabilities, limitations, and activities examined the military situation. The analysis and results confirmed that the United States should support India to become a more credible military deterrent and expand United States-India defense and security cooperation in the IOR.

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ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CSIS	Center for Strategic Studies
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DOD	Department of Defense
DOTMLPF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HA/DR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
IAF	Indian Air Force
IN	Indian Navy
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
RAND	Research and Development
SLOC	Sea Lane of Communication
SCS	South China Sea
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas
USINDOPACOM	United States Indo-Pacific Command

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage . . . it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near term and displacement of the U.S. to achieve global preeminence in the future.

—Former United States Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis,
*Summary of the 2018 National Defense
Strategy of the United States of America*

We must be willing to take the tough decisions to ensure the Indo-Pacific region and the Indian Ocean remain free, open, and prosperous . . . This requires like-minded nations to develop capabilities, leverage each other's capabilities.

—Former United States Navy Admiral Harry Harris, quoted
in *China-India Great Power Competition in the
Indian Ocean Region: Issues for Congress*

Asia is of the utmost strategic importance in today's increasingly complex and globally connected operating environment. It is the largest continent with the longest coastline, as well as home to some of the world's most prominent economies and most powerful militaries. The seas surrounding Asia, especially the waterways linking the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, are extremely important to all regional actors, specifically China, India, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Japan, and the United States. Over 25 percent of all global trade and energy transportation passes through the South China Sea (SCS), the Strait of Malacca, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Valente 2018, 1-3). Approximately 35 percent of the world's maritime oil transportation passes through the Strait of Hormuz (CRS 2018, 20). Security of these

waterways and the entire Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is of vital geo-strategic and geo-economic importance.

It is important for the United States to maintain influence in the IOR. The region is a crucial geo-strategic area as it connects energy-rich Middle Eastern states with economically dynamic, yet energy-dependent, Asian states. China and India have become increasingly concerned with these sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) and the surrounding littoral spaces, and their rivalry in this realm has strategic implications for the United States. Any disturbance in the supply of energy from the Persian Gulf would negatively affect the economies of China, India, the United States, and the world. The IOR is a key geo-economic space because it is the world's most active trade corridor. The region facilitates the transportation of two-thirds of the world's oil and one-third of the world's bulk cargo shipments (CRS 2018, 2, 6). The vast majority of China's, South Korea's, and Japan's oil supply passes through the IOR, which creates a vulnerability for these states. Due to domestic extractive technologies and efforts, the United States is far less dependent on imported energy than it used to be, but the IOR will continue to be important economically (CRS 2018, 2, 8). Security and freedom of navigation throughout the IOR are of great value to the United States. United States' economic growth is ever more dependent on trade and investment from Asian markets, which depend on the SLOCs of the IOR for trading goods and importing energy (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 10). One of the primary reasons that energy trade is so important to any nation is because it fuels economic growth, which contributes to national defense spending. The United States must maintain influence in the IOR to safeguard its access to energy imports from the Middle East; its commercial and military access through strategic chokepoints; its

ability to conduct military operations in south Africa, east Africa, and Southeast Asia; as well as to ensure regional stability (Petersen 2007, 62-63).

It is evident that China desires to increase its influence throughout the IOR. China's economic strength depends heavily on trade with Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. China's focus on "safeguarding the security of China's overseas interests and open seas protection" highlights its value of maritime trade routes through the IOR (Valente 2018, 1). China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an important part of its national strategy and has impacted many states throughout the IOR. The BRI includes trade and infrastructure investment projects throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa, many of which are along trade routes in the IOR. These projects include granting large loans to smaller, developing countries that are unable to pay China back. When unable to recompense, these smaller countries are forced to concede property, ports, or other infrastructure to Chinese control. This predatory method allows China to readily extend influence throughout the region (Valente 2018, 1-2). China's BRI throughout the IOR, as well as its aggressive actions in the SCS and East China Sea, have enthused its rivalry with India, as India's sense of security and control of its SLOCs have been threatened. As part of the BRI, China is also developing alternative land trade routes through Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh and is considering the potential for energy routes through Russia and Iran. In 2017, 68 nations and international organizations formerly agreed to cooperate with China's BRI. India is concerned that these investment projects and relationship-building enterprises are not just a way for China to exercise economic leverage, but also a gradual means of physically encircling India (CRS 2018, 2, 28, 30-31).

India feels that its sphere of influence throughout the IOR is being threatened by China's quest to expand its own influence in the region. China's assertive actions throughout Southeast Asia and the IOR threaten Indian national interests. Although India does not have a formally announced national security strategy, it can be concluded that its primary security objectives are "periphery and regional security, Asian power balances, securing channels to West Asia, and global security interests" (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 25-30). India is especially concerned with China's relationship with Pakistan, India's longtime enemy and major defense focus. For decades, China has provided economic and military support, to include the sale of weapons and nuclear technology, to Pakistan. Also concerning to India is China's construction of a deep-sea port on Pakistan's southwest coast, which will allow China to extend its naval presence throughout the IOR and to strategic chokepoints, specifically the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait Bab el-Mandeb. Many analysts believe that China's support of Pakistan is a method to counter India's rise as a regional competitor. China's building of strategically placed deep-sea ports, naval bases, and listening posts throughout the IOR has been coined its String of Pearls strategy, which will further hinder India's ability to extend influence in the region, especially in the event of armed conflict.

China is not only extending influence on India's western front, but also along its northeastern border through expanded trade and investment projects in Bangladesh and Nepal (Rehman 2009, 114-143). China has provided Bangladesh with fighter jets, military helicopters, and air defense systems. India views Nepal as a cushion between itself and China, but there is evidence that Chinese influence is spreading among the Maoist party in Nepal. India feels that China not only threatens its sphere of influence

throughout the Asia subcontinent and the IOR, but also its regional stability and balance. China continues to spread economic and military support, expand its access to strategic seaports by land and sea, and increase its presence in the IOR. Also to India's angst, China continues to invest heavily in its military inventory, advanced weaponry, anti-access/area denial capabilities, and its ability to project air and sea power. Both India and China publicly promote open and secure SLOCs throughout the IOR, but both powers "are expanding their presence into maritime regions perceived to be within one another's exclusive domains" (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 27-28, 33, 36). Consequently, the United States must remain engaged in the region, and increase its support to India as the best option to counterbalance Chinese activity that threatens its national interests.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to offer conclusions and recommendations concerning the primary research question: Given that India represents a counterbalance to China in the IOR, how can the United States reinforce that counterbalance from a military standpoint? To help investigate the primary research question and further inform the purpose of the study, the research also focused on the following three subsidiary questions:

1. What are the strategic intentions of the United States in the IOR, specifically concerning its relationships with China and India?
2. What are the current Chinese and Indian military capabilities and limitations in the IOR?
3. What are the current Chinese and Indian military activities, both cooperative and contentious, in the IOR?

This study answered these questions, reviewed the contextual knowledge needed to better understand this complex problem, and discussed potential military options for the United States in this increasingly volatile and important region of the world.

Significance of the Study

This study sought to explore the gap in knowledge concerning potential military options for the United States to reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR. As previously stated, the IOR is of extreme importance to all regional actors, and decisive actions there may have implications for the entire world. “China has both actively and passively challenged international norms and sovereignty claims” throughout the region (Valente 2018, 1). Although China claims that its actions promote regional security, it has threatened stability and challenged the international law backed by the United Nations (Valente 2018, 1). According to *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2017*, China is “determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow its military, and to control information and data to repress its society and expand its influence,” as well as “to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor” (U.S. President 2017, 2, 25). China is gradually seeking to control the Indo-Pacific region, including the IOR, through expanding its economic and political influence, controlling countries through predatory loans, and modernizing its military. China’s strategy of leveraging power could decrease the United States’ influence in the region (SecDef 2018b, 2). Although the United States must act to balance China’s assertive actions, it cannot do so alone; it must cultivate relationships with partners in the region. Vital to success will be the United States’ ability to support partner governments and security

objectives with the common long-term goal of preserving a free, open, and secure international system.

The United States has several powerful, like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific region, to include Australia, Japan, and South Korea. Of the powers in the Indo-Pacific region, India has the strongest potential to aid the United States in counterbalancing China's rise throughout the IOR due to its rapid economic and demographic growth, its comparatively low levels of national debt, and its current relationships and political influence throughout the region. India's location and operational access to the IOR is also a strategic advantage. Besides India's potential ability to counter China's power, India is a natural partner to the United States because its "liberal democratic values create an alignment of interests in areas such as counterpiracy, counterterrorism, maritime domain awareness, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief" (HA/DR) (Valente 2018, 3). India has demonstrated a willingness to work with the United States, as India also needs reliable partners to counter China and ensure peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Some experts assess that India's primary defense focus has recently shifted from Pakistan to China, as a result of China's perceived encroachment. India is continually striving to build a more substantial military to deter China from further expansion. Both India and the United States participate in multinational military exercises, defense trade, intelligence and counterterrorism cooperation, as well as efforts to prevent weapons proliferation and ensure freedom of navigation in the IOR (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 2, 5, 12).

The United States is capable of aiding India in its quest to be a more prominent global power, which would allow India to push back on China's power projection.

Considering ways in which the United States can reinforce India as a counterbalance to China is significant because the United States-India relationship is still immature and needs to be carefully nurtured. In reinforcing India, the United States must balance India's interests with its own. It must be a symbiotic relationship, not one that is largely detrimental to India's interests while strongly beneficial to the United States. The United States must take India's foreign policy goals into consideration to decrease the chance of conflict between all regional actors (Rehman 2009, 114-143).

Assumptions

This study analyzed how the United States can reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR from a military standpoint. The research was based on the following five assumptions that the researcher did not attempt to control:

1. States cannot be certain of the strategic intentions of other states. The United States strives to accurately identify and assess the strategic intentions of China and India, but their true intentions are exceedingly difficult to perceive and measure (Mearsheimer 2018).
2. States rank survival as their most important goal. China, India, and the United States have many goals, to include maximizing influence throughout their respective regions and the world, but survival is ultimately the priority because without it no other goals can be achieved (Mearsheimer 2018).
3. China and India will continue to rise in national power, despite foreign and domestic hindrances, and the United States will maintain its position as a strategic, economic, political, and military global superpower with interest in the IOR (Anderson 2007, 8-9).

4. India will remain a stable democracy despite changing leadership and security objectives (Petersen 2007, 4). This is an important assumption because it will allow many United States and Indian interests to align more readily, promoting their partnership.
5. The IOR, due to its SLOCs and strategic chokepoints, will remain of crucial geo-strategic and geo-economic importance to all regional actors, specifically the United States, China, and India.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and phrases are defined to facilitate the reader's understanding throughout the study.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): This association includes the countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam; which form their own subregion of the IOR. ASEAN is also one of the key entities in terms of regional security. The waters surrounding these states connect the IOR with the SCS and pass trillions of dollars in trade annually. Although the United States is not an ASEAN member state, the partnership between the United States and ASEAN has been cultivated since 1977 and has included annual summits since 2011 (East-West Center 2019).

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Previously known as the One Belt, One Road strategy (Kronstadt and Akhtar 2017, 12), this is the crux of China's strategy to expand influence along overland and sea routes through Asia and to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. This initiative includes infrastructure and investment projects and allows China to expand its sphere of economic leverage. Although the BRI was first coined in 2013 by

China's President Xi, its historical significance ties to the ancient land and maritime corridors of China's Silk Road (CRS 2018, 10, 25).

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): First officially introduced in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), which is also defined in this section, the EEZ includes the territorial seas within 370 kilometers of a nation's coastline. A nation has the right to exclude other nations from gathering marine resources within its EEZ, but other nations can conduct maritime navigation through and fly over the EEZ (Estoquia 2012). Access to a nation's EEZ is conditional, based on the regulations established by that nation. For example, China claims that other nations do not have the right to use its EEZ for military surveillance operations or marine research (Gilboy and Heginbotham 2013, 133).

Indian Ocean Region (IOR): This region, part of the Indo-Pacific region, includes the Indian Ocean, "Andaman Sea, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Flores Sea, Great Australian Bight, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Java Sea, Mozambique Channel, Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Save Sea, Strait of Malacca, and Timor Sea." It also includes the major ports at Madras, India; Calcutta, India; Bombay, India; and Colombo, Sri Lanka (Cordesman, Toukan, Dewit, and Berntsen 2014a, 1).

Indo-Pacific Region: *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2017* defined this region as the space from "the west coast of India to the western shores of the United States" (U.S. President 2017, 46). In addition to that space, this study also recognized the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, and the maritime space east of Africa as part of this region. The Indo-Pacific region is currently a major multinational partner cooperation and security focus of the United States Department of

Defense (DOD) (Ayres 2018), so much so that the DOD recently renamed its Pacific Command to the United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) (BBC 2018).

Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs): These are sea routes between ports for commercial trade, transportation, and military maritime purposes. This study was primarily concerned with the SLOCs through the IOR used for trading goods and transporting energy (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 6-7).

Strategic Chokepoint: For the purpose of this study, this is a geographical maritime feature with strategic importance due to its natural canalization of commercial and military assets. The strategic chokepoints in the IOR are the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait Bab el-Mandeb. While moving through these narrow points in the IOR, commercial vessels are more susceptible to the dangers of piracy and terrorist attacks (CRS 2018, 20).

String of Pearls Strategy: This term is closely tied to China's BRI and refers to China's plan to protect its trade that passes through the SLOCs of the IOR, specifically through strategic chokepoints. The "String of Pearls" comprises of the many deep-sea ports, naval bases, and listening posts that China has acquired or constructed throughout the IOR. It is important to note that this term was coined by the United States DOD, not the Chinese government (Rehman 2009, 122).

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS): This international treaty was signed in 1982 to settle myriad territorial disputes that countries were having concerning the seas beyond their coastlines. The convention defined the limits of territorial waters for coastal nations and where nations can harvest economic resources. As territorial disagreements between coastal states is still inevitable, the International

Tribunal on the Law of the Sea is the court established under the UNCLOS to resolve these conflicts. Although China signed the UNCLOS in 1996 (Estoquia 2012), China's actions in the SCS show that the parameters of the UNCLOS are considered open to interpretation by some (Valente 2018, 2). Along with China, India and 166 other states are members of the UNCLOS; however, the United States still chooses not to ratify the treaty. Although the United States agrees with and abides by nearly all the terms of the UNCLOS, the Senate during the last three presidential administrations, has not agreed to sign the treaty largely due to distrust of international organizations and international law and the belief that being a signatory would be disadvantageous to national interests (Almond 2017).

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study included an analysis of the current military situation in the IOR and how the United States can reinforce India as a counterbalance to China from a military standpoint. The reader must consider the following two weaknesses imposed by constraints beyond the researcher's control:

1. Although China and India have voiced and expressed strategic views and security objectives, neither state has presented a recent official national security strategy (Negi 2007, 10). India does not have a formal national security or national defense strategy (Campose 2016, 15). This gap in literature presented a limitation to this study.
2. The recommendations in chapter 5 of this study are offered with the caveat that the relations between China, India, and the United States can change abruptly, which may negate the relevance of these recommendations over

time. Due to the current dynamic operating environment, states in the Indo-Pacific region must maintain fluid foreign relations. Open boundaries, open economies, and states having both convergent and divergent views and interests add to the complexity. Also of note are the many variables and actors, both state and non-state, that influence the decision making of China and India (Chatterjee 2011, 74-95).

Delimitations

The reader must also consider the following four delimitations, or constraints imposed on the scope of the study by the researcher:

1. Although the United States may benefit from reinforcing India as a counterbalance to China, its influence on India will inevitably affect other countries throughout Southeast Asia and the IOR. Due to the region's extensive history and connected economies, United States' decisions and actions concerning one state will likely have implications for many states. This study did not cover the effects of United States' actions on every state in the region. It focused primarily on the implications for China and India.
2. For the purpose of the study, the researcher primarily analyzed the military situation concerning the military capabilities and limitations of China and India, rather than every state with military assets operating in the IOR. Also, the study focused on Chinese and Indian military activities in the IOR, primarily their respective naval and air forces, rather than military activities throughout the Asia subcontinent.

3. This study analyzed the current military situation in the IOR by framing Chinese and Indian military capabilities and limitations with the elements of organization, materiel, and facilities, rather than all the elements of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P), as defined by the United States DOD.
4. The researcher limited the literature review to unclassified open-source material, as opposed to classified closed-source material.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, as well as assumptions, definition of terms, scope and limitations, and delimitations that the reader must consider. The IOR is of vital geo-strategic and geo-economic importance to all regional actors. The assertive actions of one of those actors, China, has threatened the interests of many other actors, specifically the United States and India. The United States must not act unilaterally in its attempt to ensure security and stability in the region, and India is the most natural counterbalance to China's actions. The United States must not act unilaterally in this effort due to China's economic and military strength, the United States' geographic distance from the region, and the need for regional powers to play a prominent and unified role in ensuring regional security. This study analyzed how the United States can reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR through use of the military instrument of power. Next, chapter 2 reviews and evaluates the existing literature on the primary and subsidiary research questions presented in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and briefly evaluate the existing literature that explores the primary and subsidiary research questions of this study. To review, the primary research question is: Given that India represents a counterbalance to China in the IOR, how can the United States reinforce that counterbalance from a military standpoint? This chapter examined the available literature to answer the subsidiary research questions and is divided into eight sections in accordance with literature type. Ample literature is available in the form of national strategy documents, Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) reports, CNA Analysis and Solutions reports, Research and Development (RAND) reports, academic papers, as well as journal articles and news articles from both domestic and foreign sources. The amalgamation of these eight types of literature provided insight into the overview and background information needed to understand the context and importance of the primary research question, the strategic intentions of the United States in the IOR, the current Chinese and Indian military capabilities and limitations in the region, and the current Chinese and Indian military activities in the region.

National Strategy Documents

It was valuable to look at the most recent United States government documents that discuss national strategy, foreign policy, and domestic security. In *The National*

Security Strategy of the United States of America 2017, President Donald J. Trump discussed how the United States plans to pursue and protect its national interests despite its many competitors and threats throughout the world; how China seeks to erode current world order and challenges the United States' power, security, and prosperity; and the United States' strategy to partner with India as a major defense partner in the Indo-Pacific region (U.S. President 2017, 2, 25, 46-47, 50). In the *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis gave guidance as to how the United States plans to protect its security interests through deterring war to carrying out armed conflict, if necessary. Mattis also discussed how China's assertive actions in the Indo-Pacific region threaten United States' security (SecDef 2018b, 3-4). The *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018*, also produced by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, was an extensive review of China's strategy to expand global presence, progress in developing a more advanced and capable People's Liberation Army (PLA), as well as China's cooperative activities with other countries (SecDef 2018a, i-iii).

In the *National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015*, the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed an array of national security challenges from state and non-state actors, how the United States will employ its military forces to protect its interests, and how China's claims and actions are inconsistent with international law. The document also mentioned the importance of the United States strengthening its partnership with India (JCS 2015, 2). The *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy* discussed the DOD's plan to pursue national security objectives in a volatile operating environment, as well as

covered military modernization and cooperative and contentious activities throughout the Asia-Pacific region (DOD 2015, 1-3, 10-15, 19-31). The recent policy report from the White House, *How China's Economic Aggression Threatens the Technologies and Intellectual Property of the United States and the World*, documented China's aggressive economic and industrial actions throughout the world, but specifically against the United States (White House 2018, 2-5). These documents helped answer the first subsidiary research question of this study by identifying the strategic intentions of the United States in the IOR. Similar documents produced by China and India revealed how United States' intentions relate to those of China and India.

Regarding foreign national strategy documents, *China's Military Strategy*, produced by the Xinhua Agency in 2015, shared China's perceived threats and aspirations to maintain peace while continuing to modernize and build its armed forces (Xinhua 2015, 3-19). Also of value was the most recent Indian maritime security strategy, published in 2015, which was a revision of the strategy published in 2007. This document covered the importance of secure seas and SLOCs, developments to maritime security threats, and strategic guidance for the Indian Navy (IN) (Indian Navy, 2015). The greatest gap in literature relevant to this study was the limited Chinese and Indian national strategy documents. Pertinent information surrounding India's current and projected military organization and facilities throughout the IOR proved to be especially elusive. Also of note, open source national strategy documents may not be an accurate reflection of a nation's true or comprehensive intentions.

CRS Reports

The CRS works for the United States Congress by providing thorough policy and legal research and analysis to committees and members of the House and the Senate, ensuring an informed national legislature. Recent reports analyzing the relationships of China, India, and the United States were of great value to this study. These reports assisted in answering each of the three subsidiary research questions of this study. In the 2018 report titled *China-India Great Power Competition in the Indian Ocean Region: Issues for Congress*, the author (name redacted) highlighted the strategic and economic importance of the IOR, China's dependence on SLOCs and its assertive actions in the region, and India's perception that China is gradually encircling it (CRS 2018, 2). In the 2018 report, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress*, Ronald O'Rourke, Specialist in Naval Affairs, assessed that China's naval intentions are publicly unknown and reviewed China's naval limitations and capabilities (O'Rourke 2018, 4-5, 8-76). Ian Rinehart, Analyst in Asian Affairs, provided an assessment of the PLA's organization, capabilities and modernization, limitations and challenges, and relations with other militaries in his report *The Chinese Military: Overview and Issues for Congress* (Rinehart 2016, 2-33). Both O'Rourke's and Rinehart's reports were valuable in exploring the military situation in the IOR.

The United States must understand India's security concerns to better aid India to counterbalance China. In the 2017 report titled *India-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, Alan Kronstadt, Specialist in South Asian Affairs, and Shayerah Akhtar, Specialist in International Trade and Finance, reviewed areas of convergence and divergence between

the United States and India (Kronstadt and Akhtar 2017, 12-13, 17-21). In the 2013 report titled *U.S.-India Security Relations: Strategic Issues*, Kronstadt discussed the importance of the current and future relationship between the United States and India and how both states must maximize similar interests and objectives and narrow their differences (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 5, 55). This report also stressed the importance of India's power projection farther into the IOR, which helped shaped several of the recommendations offered in this study. In the 2011 report titled *India: Domestic Issues, Strategic Dynamics, and U.S. Relations*, Kronstadt examined security cooperation between India and the United States, the benefits of continuing to strengthen that partnership, and how India's sphere of influence throughout Southeast Asia and the IOR compares to that of China's (Kronstadt, Kerr, Martin, and Vaughn 2011, i). This report helped the researcher better understand India's regional rivalries and foreign policy. All three of Kronstadt's reports were valuable in considering how the United States can militarily reinforce India in the IOR.

CSIS Reports

CSIS is a non-profit organization based in Washington, District of Columbia that conducts research and analysis of the world's most complex problems to help develop solutions and influence decision makers. A number of these reports were eye opening in regard to the research questions proposed in this study, as well as helpful in offering recommendations for United States' decision makers. In the 2016 CSIS report titled *Asia-Pacific Rebalance 2025: Capabilities, Presence, and Partnerships*, Michael Green and other study directors, team leads, and contributing authors provided a review of the United States' defense strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. This review included insights

into the historical interests of the United States in Asia and the capabilities and shortfalls of both the Indian and Chinese militaries (Green, Hicks, and Cancian 2016, 10-175). Green's points surrounding the survivability and sustainability of Indian military facilities and assets in the IOR also helped the researcher offer recommendations to decision makers. In the 2015 report titled *Chinese Strategy and Military Modernization in 2015*, Anthony Cordesman, the Burke Chair in Strategy at CSIS, along with other authors, provided a thorough analysis of Chinese military strengths and limitations and competitive and cooperative activities throughout Asia. (Cordesman, Colley, and Wang 2015, 2-493). Cordesman also discussed the shift in the United States' global strategy to rebalance Asia, primarily to respond to China's development into a "global economic superpower" and a "major regional military power" (Cordesman et al. 2015, 1).

Cordesman, with the assistance of other experts, also wrote two reports in 2014 that helped the researcher answer the primary and subsidiary research questions. The report titled *The Indian Ocean Region: A Strategic Assessment*, provided important background information on the IOR and its sub-regions, as well as the need for the United States to rely on strategic partners to ensure stability in the region (Cordesman et al. 2014a, 1-309). The report titled *Chinese Strategy and Military Power in 2014: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, and US Perspectives*, examined strategic competition and cooperation between the United States and China and the need for the United States to rebalance Asia due to recent Chinese economic and military growth (Cordesman, Lin, Berntsen, Duhamel, Hess, and Yarosh 2014b, 63-428). In the 2012 report titled *U.S.-India Military Engagement: Steady as They Go*, S. Amer Latif offered understanding of the history of cooperation between the United States and India, the need

for continued cooperation, and the challenges for and concerns of both parties (Latif 2012, viii-60). Latif also articulated the importance of India creating clear strategic and defense goals, which helped shape the recommendations offered in this study. Although not a CSIS report, Zack Cooper's article for the *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, "Security Implications of China's Military Presence in the Indian Ocean," was recently published on the CSIS website. Cooper outlined China's capabilities in the IOR and their implications during peacetime and war. He argued that Chinese forces and infrastructure in the IOR would be more of a vulnerability than a source of strength during a major conflict (Cooper 2018).

CNA Analysis and Solutions Reports

CNA is a non-profit research and analysis organization located in Arlington, Virginia. CNA is not an acronym and contains the federally funded Center for Naval Analyses and the Institute for Public Research. Its research scientists and analysts are committed to solving problems and helping decision makers. These reports also aided in answering each of the three subsidiary research questions of this study. In the 2017 report titled *Weighted West, Focused on the Indian Ocean and Cooperating across the Indo-Pacific: The Indian Navy's New Maritime Strategy, Capabilities, and Diplomacy*, Satu Limaye detailed the current Indian maritime strategy, naval focus areas and capabilities, and cooperative activities in Southeast Asia and the IOR, such as HA/DR and noncombatant evacuation operations. Limaye also revealed parallel efforts between the United States and India, which was beneficial in determining how to continue to improve upon areas of partnership (Limaye 2017, 1-53).

The 2012 report titled *The Long Littoral Project: Bay of Bengal*, was one of six reports of an 18-month CNA study, *The Long Littoral Project*, conducted to explore the United States' security situation as it disengaged from major operations in Afghanistan and shifted focus to the Indo-Pacific region. In this report, focused on the Bay of Bengal, Nilanthi Samaranyake analyzed the security issues in this sub-region of the IOR. She considered Chinese and Indian activities in the region, to include building infrastructure and conducting naval exercises, and highlighted Indian naval cooperation with countries whose coast share the Bay of Bengal (Samaranyake 2012, 5-28). Michael McDevitt's 2013 report titled *The Long Littoral Project: Summary Report: A Maritime Perspective on Indo-Pacific Security*, was the final report of *The Long Littoral Project*. This report was beneficial in describing the United States' expeditionary posture in the region, as well as the organizational structure of the IN (McDevitt 2013, 11-22). Murray Tanner is the lead author of the 2011 report titled *Distracted Antagonists, Wary Partners: China and India Assess their Security Relations*. This report reiterated the importance of the United States' understanding of the relationship between China and India, especially concerning the intentions of both states in the Indo-Pacific region. Tanner described the military buildup of both nations, as well as China's increased presence in the IOR, through its String of Pearls strategy (Tanner, Dumbaugh, and Easton 2011, 17-44).

RAND Reports

The RAND Corporation is a non-profit organization financed by the United States Government with locations in North America, Europe, and Australia that provides expert research and analysis to help improve policy challenges throughout the world. The RAND Corporation has a reputation for quality and objective reports, several of which

informed the research of this study, specifically in evaluating China's military capabilities and limitations and answering the second subsidiary research question of this study. Eric Heginbotham is the primary author of the report titled *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power 1996-2017*. This report described the PLA's transformation over the past 20 years and reviewed how each facet of the PLA compares to the United States military, in both capabilities and shortfalls. Although PLA modernization has implications for the United States, the authors stated that the goal is to avoid war with China (Heginbotham, Nixon, Morgan, Heim, Hagen, Li, Engstrom, Libicki, DeLuca, Shlapak, Frelinger, Laird, Brady, and Morris 2015, 67-343). Michael Chase is the head author of the report titled *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)*. Chase continued to examine the PLA's development since the mid-1990s and expounded on the PLA's strategic objectives. This report was especially valuable in identifying PLA weaknesses in the elements of organization and facilities (Chase, Engstrom, Cheung, Gunness, Harold, Puska, and Berkowitz 2015, 44-98). Terrence Kelly is the lead author of the research brief titled *Developing a U.S. Strategy for Dealing with China—Now and into the Future*. Kelly reported that China is rapidly closing the gap with the United States from a military standpoint and specified key advantages that China may gain over the United States. Kelly also offered recommendations as to how the United States can most optimally use its instruments of national power in the Indo-Pacific region (Kelly, Dobbins, Shlapak, Gompert, Heginbotham, Chalk, and Thrall 2014, 1-3).

Academic Papers

Many papers written for academic institutions shed light on the primary and subsidiary research questions of this study. Geoffrey Till's 2014 contribution to the United States Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, "A New Type of Great Power Relationship Between the United States and China: The Military Dimension," asserted that China is a formidable power and potential adversary for the United States, that there are growing nationalist feelings throughout China, and reiterated the need for the United States to continue seeking and strengthening partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region (Till 2014, 2-59). Also written for the United States Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, Harsh Pant's report titled "The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties" focused on the economic rise of China and India, the ties between these two nations over the past several decades, as well as what these ties mean for the United States and the world. Pant also discussed China's String of Pearls strategy and projection of maritime power in the IOR, as well as Indian infrastructure projects and military cooperation throughout the region (Pant 2014, 8-39). Although not an academic paper, Pant wrote a more recent article for *War Fare* titled "China's Military Rise and the Indian Challenge." Pant examined how China's rise threatens India and that although the military force ratios are in favor of China, one of India's short-term advantages is China's lack of experience conducting joint operations (Pant and Das, 2018).

Stephen Burgess' 2013 strategic paper for the United States Air War College, "A Pivot to India? The US-India Strategic Partnership and Multipolarity in Asia," examined United States and Indian relations, China's String of Pearls strategy, China's vulnerabilities in the IOR, and several of India's military capability gaps (Burgess 2013,

4-11). Robert Sutter is the primary author of the paper titled “Balancing Acts: The U.S. Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability,” written in 2013 for The George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs and Sigur Center for Asian Studies. Sutter explained that China’s increasing assertiveness drives the need for United States’ policy to rebalance Asia; he included arguments for and against the rebalance policy (Sutter, Brown, Adamson, Mochizuki, and Ollapally 2013, 9-27). Finally, the International Institute for Strategic Studies is a research institute based in London that publishes assessments and reports and hosts dialogues and lectures around the world on topics concerning international affairs. Although not an academic paper, the 2017 Fullerton Lecture, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Singapore, included insightful and telling remarks made by former United States Navy Admiral Harry Harris, the former commander of the USINDOPACOM. Admiral Harris spoke about the economic significance of the Indo-Pacific region, threats to United States’ interests in the region, and the importance of boosting regional security through multinational partnerships. He also divulged that the United States is seeking overlapping interests with China, although China continues to present a tremendous security challenge in the region (Harris 2017).

This study also benefited from analyzing the results of previous theses and monographs completed at military graduate school equivalents. United States Army Major Matthew W. St. Pierre’s monograph, completed at the United States Army School of Advanced Military Studies in 2014, explored the implications that Chinese control of the Spratly Islands in the SCS could have on the IOR and on the United States, as well as how the United States can support a third party, India, to gain a position of advantage

over China (St. Pierre 2014, 9-57). United States Marine Corps Major Rory Kent's Master of Military Studies Research Paper, completed at the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College in 2013, highlighted the potential for India to be a stabilizing force in the Indo-Pacific region, the need for India to have a greater maritime presence in the IOR, and several of India's military weaknesses (Kent 2013, 32-35). Australian Army Colonel Dan McDaniel's research paper, completed at the Australian Defence College in 2012, discussed the importance of the Indo-Pacific region, implications of China's and India's rapid rise, India's security concerns with China, several of the PLA's weaknesses, and how India can benefit from partnership with the United States (McDaniel 2012, 14-41).

The final three master's theses reviewed were completed at the United States Army Command and General Staff College. Bengali Army Major S. M. Naimul Haque's thesis analyzed the India-China rivalry and the strategic options for Bangladesh's alignment with either country (Haque 2013, 30-38). Indian Army Major Banit Singh Negi's thesis looked at the relationships between China, India, and the United States as a strategic triangle. Negi analyzed their convergences and divergences and how the relationship between two of the states will inevitably affect the third state (Negi 2007, 39-85). United States Army Major Richard G. Peterson's thesis explored the United States' need for a strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific region to ensure stability and security of foreign and domestic interests and examined if providing more security assistance to the Indian military would be beneficial or detrimental to United States' influence (Peterson 2007, 3-72).

Journal Articles

Many journal articles, from both domestic and foreign sources, contributed to the research of this study. The following journal articles offered insight into the relations, intentions, and concerns of China, India, and the United States in the IOR. Samir Tata's piece for *The US Army War College Quarterly Parameters*, "US Landpower and an Indo-American Alliance," conferred that a defense treaty between the United States and India would be beneficial, considering China's growing strength, and offered recommendations for the parameters of such a treaty. In discussing the potential for the United States and India to face China together, Tata compared the gross domestic product (GDP), population, active duty military, and defense spending of the three powers. He also included the hindrances to forming an alliance between the United States and India (Tata 2018, 95-106). Alyssa Ayres' expert brief for the *Council on Foreign Relations*, "The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy Needs More Indian Ocean," stressed the growing importance of India in the Indo-Pacific region. She also asserted that there is a need for the United States to establish less ambiguous strategic initiatives and approaches in the region that incorporate India's concerns as well (Ayres 2018).

Bhartendu Singh's contribution to the *Centre for Land Warfare Studies Journal*, "Chinese Naval Movement in the Indian Ocean: Testing Military Intervention in Maldives?" reiterated that coalitions and cooperative exercises between powers in the IOR will help contain China's aggressive actions in the region (Singh 2018). Also published in the *Centre for Land Warfare Studies Journal*, Philip Compose's contribution, "India's National Security Strategy: Imperative of Integrating Defence Policy," highlighted the importance of India's need to establish formal national security

and national defense strategies (Campose 2016, 15-32). George J. Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham's article for the *Washington Quarterly*, "Double Trouble: A Realist View of Chinese and Indian Power," presented the argument that although many United States leaders think that India is a natural counterbalance to China, the reality is that both China and India will pursue their own national interests, which in many cases conflict with the United States' interests. This reasoned article concluded that the United States should pursue its partnership with India but must carefully build political and economic coalitions in India to ensure the relationship is sustainable (Gilboy and Heginbotham 2013, 125-142).

Ananya Chatterjee's article for *Political Perspectives*, "India-China-United States: The Post-Cold War Evolution of a Strategic Triangle," reviewed the strategic triangle formed by India, China, and the United States and took a deep look at the complex historical, current, and projected relationships between the three states. Chatterjee's contribution helped paint perspective of the region studied and the key actors involved, which helped inform the conclusions of this study (Chatterjee 2011, 74-95). Iskander Rehman's article for *Asian Security*, "Keeping the Dragon at Bay: India's Counter-Containment of China in Asia," thoroughly analyzed China-India relations. Rehman showed that both China and India seek regional supremacy and that conflicts arise when the interests of both powers overlap. He concluded that India must contest China when necessary to ensure a healthy power balance in the Indo-Pacific region (Rehman 2009, 114-143).

The following journal articles analyzed China's perceived aggressive actions in the IOR, specifically its String of Pearls strategy and expanded naval presence. Peter

Valente's contribution to the *Modern War Institute at West Point*, "The Tiger and the Dragon: India as a Counterbalance to China in the Indo-Pacific," did an excellent job of clarifying the strategic importance of the region and how China's actions have "challenged international norms and sovereignty claims." Valente stressed the United States' need for a strong partner to respond to China, and that India is that partner. Valente also discussed the current military situation in the region and recommended how the United States should shape the situation through military partnership with India (Valente 2018, 1-7). Meia Nouwens' column for *The Military Balance Blog*, "China and India: Competition for Indian Ocean Dominance?" explored the elements of China's BRI and provided a comparison of Chinese and Indian naval and air power and capabilities (Nouwens 2018).

Joseph Lee, the lead author of "China and India: Globalization with Different Paths," featured in the *Global Asia Journal*, considered the historical relations between China and India, including times of peace, disputes, and armed conflict. He focused on recent security issues that have affected relations between the two states, including China's String of Pearls strategy, which threatens India's sphere of influence in the IOR (Lee, Kolluri, and Shen 2015, 1-39). United States Air Force Captain Craig Neuman's report for *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, "Forging an Indian Partnership," studied India's population, industrial production, and infrastructure in the IOR, as well as the danger of China's String of Pearls strategy. He also conferred about the importance of defense cooperation between the United States and India in the form of naval exercises, professional military education exchanges, and counterterrorism activities (Neuman 2012, 112-144). Dhruv Katoch's article for the *Centre for Land Warfare Studies Journal*,

“Is China Encircling India?” discussed the strategic rivalry between China and India and China’s String of Pearls strategy. Katoch specifically assessed China’s infrastructure projects in Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, as well as the risks and costs of this strategy for China (Katoch 2009, 27-38).

News Articles

In addition to journal articles, news articles from domestic sources provided awareness of the current military and economic situation in the IOR and the intentions of key actors in the region. Joseph Micallef’s contribution to *Military.com*, “China’s Indian Ocean Ambitions,” was a great reference concerning China’s most recent infrastructure expansion projects throughout the IOR and beyond, specifically in Djibouti, as well as the PLA’s shift in focus to power projection and naval expansion across the world (Micallef 2019). Panos Mourdoukoutas’ contribution to *Forbes*, “What’s China Doing in the Indian Ocean?” talked about how Chinese military presence in the IOR is becoming more common and that it will likely continue to expand in the region. He claimed that China intends to encircle India, as India fears, and discussed several of India’s counter actions (Mourdoukoutas 2018). Hal Brands’ feature in *Bloomberg Opinion*, “China’s Master Plan: A Global Military Threat,” discussed China’s economic vulnerability in the IOR, specifically in the vicinity of strategic chokepoints, and declared that although the PLA is becoming an increasingly modern force, it will not be able to match the operational reach of the United States’ military for several decades (Brands 2018). Concerning India’s plan to counter China’s naval expansion into the IOR, Christopher Woody’s article for *Business Insider*, “With an eye on China, India is looking to buy

more US-made advanced sub-hunting planes,” explored India’s effort to strengthen and project its naval power (Woody 2018).

Kevin Baron’s article for *Defense One*, “In Pacific, US Army Shifts Training from Disaster Relief to War,” reiterated the United States’ shift in national security focus to the Indo-Pacific region and how that has shaped training efforts of United States Army forces in the region (Barron 2018). Nyshka Chandran’s contribution to the *Consumer News and Business Channel*, “Indian Military Scrambles to Keep Up After China Moves to Put Forces in Africa,” discussed India’s most recent infrastructure projects throughout the IOR to counter China’s String of Pearls strategy (Chandran 2018). Hillary Clinton’s feature in *Foreign Policy*, “America’s Pacific Century,” claimed that the United States needs to invest time and energy in the Asia-Pacific region, as it will continue to grow in political and economic importance. Clinton also stressed the need to strengthen United States relationships with all regional actors, to include China, through building mutual trust while never failing to foster and defend democracy and human rights (Clinton 2011). Also helpful was an article published by the East-West Center, a nonprofit organization in Washington, District of Columbia, as part of the Asia Matters for America project. The article, titled “What is ASEAN?” defined ASEAN and briefly discussed its history and relationship with the United States (East-West Center 2019).

News articles from international and foreign sources were also of value. *The Diplomat*, an international news magazine headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, recently published two articles concerning China’s actions in the IOR. Zoe Stanley-Lockman’s report, “A First: China, EU Launch New Combined Military Exercise,” examined a recent naval exercise between the European Union (EU) and the PLA Navy (PLAN) in

the Gulf of Aden. The most unusual activity during the exercise was that the Chinese allowed EU personnel to enter their base in Djibouti. Stanley-Lockman alluded to the fact that this rare event may point toward more Chinese military cooperation with western forces in the future (Stanley-Lockman 2018). Monish Tourangbam's and Pooja Bhatt's article, "India-US-China: Aligning Interests or Managing Threats," stated that the United States and India should build a partnership to preserve stability in the IOR, but that efforts to counter China's assertive actions in the region should not hinder diplomatic relations between India and China (Tourangbam and Bhatt 2018). Also published in *The Diplomat*, Franz-Stefan Gady's articles, "Lockheed Martin to Build F-16 Wings in India" and "Lockheed Martin Offers India Upgraded F-16 Fighter Jet," examined Lockheed Martin's move in fighter jet wing production from Israel to India (Gady 2018) and the company's intent to win a contract to provide the Indian Air Force (IAF) with 110 upgraded fighter jets (Gady 2019). Zhou Bo's column in the *South China Morning Post*, "China and India Need to Talk, Navy to Navy, to Prevent Indian Ocean Hostilities," recognized that a primary reason that the IOR is becoming an increasingly controversial area is due to China's BRI. However, Zhou explained that China, much like India and other regional actors, has valid security interests in the IOR. Zhou, an honorary fellow with the Academy of Military Science of the PLA, also stated that rules of conduct recognized by both China and India would help prevent escalation to conflict in the region (Bo 2018).

Nasser Haidar's article in the *NATO Association of Canada*, "The Indian Ocean: A New Frontier," reviewed the vital economic importance of the IOR to all countries in the region and to the world. Haidar wrote about how India plans to balance the perceived

assertive actions of China's infrastructure projects throughout the IOR, and how many nations are becoming increasingly involved in preserving their trade routes in the region by funding construction of commercial facilities that could be rapidly militarized (Haidar 2018). The British Broadcasting Corporation published a brief article, "US Military Renames Pacific Command," which highlighted the recent change in name of the United States Pacific Command to the USINDOPACOM, which reflects the growing importance of India and the IOR to United States' national strategy. The USINDOPACOM is the United States' largest and primary military command (BBC 2018). In 2012, Global Media Arts News, based in the Philippines, published Aileen Estoquia's article titled "What you need to know about the UNCLOS, the ITLOS, and the EEZ." As the title suggests, Estoquia did a great job defining and explaining several of the key terms in this study, specifically UNCLOS and EEZ (Estoquia 2012). Roncevert Almond's 2017 article for *The Diplomat*, "U.S. Ratification of the Law of the Sea Convention," also helped examine the UNCLOS, specifically why the United States has not ratified the treaty, which served the researcher in offering recommendations to United States' decision makers (Almond 2017).

Summary

Chapter 2 summarized the many contributions that other researchers and writers have made on topics related to the primary and subsidiary research questions of this study. These key works included relevant national strategy documents of the United States, China, and India, CRS reports, CSIS reports, CNA Analysis and Solutions reports, RAND reports, academic papers, and journal and news articles from domestic and foreign sources. This literature provided insight into the strategic intentions of the United

States in the IOR, the current Chinese and Indian military capabilities and limitations in the region, and the current Chinese and Indian military activities in the region. This literature review helped the researcher draw conclusions and recommendations concerning how the United States can reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR from a military standpoint. Next, chapter 3 outlines the research method applied to gather pertinent information to answer the research questions, and provides a visual model showing the steps of the methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology used to make conclusions concerning the study's primary research question: Given that India represents a counterbalance to China in the IOR, how can the United States reinforce that counterbalance from a military standpoint? Conclusions are made and recommendations are offered after investigation into the following subsidiary research questions:

1. What are the strategic intentions of the United States in the IOR, specifically concerning its relationships with China and India?
2. What are the current Chinese and Indian military capabilities and limitations in the IOR?
3. What are the current Chinese and Indian military activities, both cooperative and contentious, in the IOR?

To answer these questions, this study employed a qualitative analysis methodology, specifically a capabilities-based analysis of the Chinese and Indian militaries by applying DOTMLPF-P. This approach followed four steps. The first three steps were taken in chapter 4, Findings and Analysis, and the final step was taken in chapter 5, Conclusions and Recommendations.

1. The first step was to answer the first subsidiary question by identifying the strategic intentions of the United States in the IOR, specifically concerning its relationships with China and India. This information helped generate acceptable military options for how the United States can reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the region. The current military situation in the

IOR was explored in the following two steps.

2. The second step was to analyze Chinese and Indian military capabilities and limitations in the IOR by applying the elements of organization, material, and facilities of DOTMLPF-P. This information answered the second subsidiary question and facilitated better understanding of the military situation in the region. Indian military limitations, especially in light of Chinese military capabilities, were considered when determining how the United States can best reinforce India from a military standpoint.
3. To help further understand the military situation in the IOR, the researcher analyzed current Chinese and Indian military activities in the region, both points of cooperation and contention with other states. This information answered the third subsidiary question and had implications in determining how the United States should best reinforce India from a military standpoint.
4. The final step was to answer the primary research question by further analyzing the answers to the three subsidiary questions. Using this methodology, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made concerning how the United States can reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR. Recommendations were made for United States' decision makers, as well as for future researchers. Below is a diagram of the qualitative analysis methodology workflow.

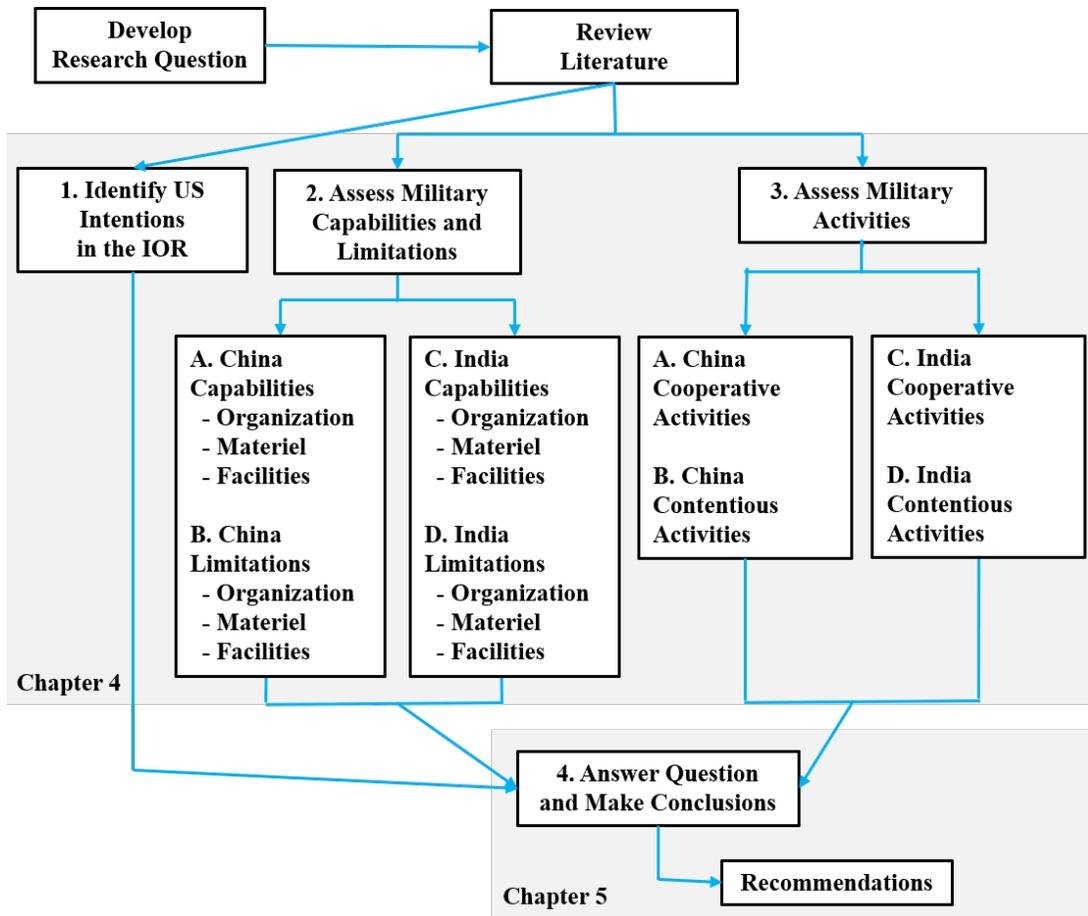


Figure 1. Research Methodology Model

Source: Created by author.

In summary, this chapter discussed the research methodology to answer the primary and subsidiary research questions. This study identified the strategic intentions of the United States in the IOR and explored Chinese and Indian military capabilities, limitations, and activities in the region. Next, chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis of the evidence produced from the first three steps of the research methodology.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

And we're enhancing regional security by deepening our partnerships with India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and many other like-minded nations who are dedicated to the longstanding, customary international law. These principles provide the foundation of the rules-based international order: the peaceful resolution of disputes; freedom of navigation for military and civilian ships and aircraft; and unimpeded lawful commerce.

—Former United States Navy Admiral
Harry Harris, *IISS Fullerton Lecture*

As a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future, by upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends.

—Former United States President Barack Obama, quoted in
*A New Type of Great Power Relationship Between the
United States and China: The Military Dimension*

Over the course of the past several decades, military dominance in Asia has increasingly shifted from the United States to China. China has developed formidable naval and air forces that could potentially gain superiority over the United States in a conflict in the Pacific Ocean or in the IOR. China will continue to present a significant security challenge to the United States as China's economic growth continues to exceed that of the United States and it continues to prioritize defense spending and modernization of its armed forces (Heginbotham et al. 2015, 342-343). The United States must tip the balance of power in the IOR toward its interests and the interests of its allies and the world. This chapter helps the reader gain a better understanding of the United States' intentions in the region. It also explored the military situation in the region by analyzing the military capabilities and limitations of China's and India's armed forces,

with a focus on naval and air forces, as well as the cooperative and contentious military activities of both powers. The findings in this chapter were used to answer the primary research question of this study, conclusions and recommendations for which were offered in chapter 5.

Step 1: United States Strategic Intentions in the IOR

The United States' strategic intentions in the IOR are wed to its historical interests in the Indo-Pacific region and throughout all of Asia. The United States has consistently pursued several national interests in the Indo-Pacific region, to include the security of the American people and partner nations, the growth of international trade and investment, and the support of democratic principles. In pursuing these interests in the IOR, the United States must prevent divergent major powers from eroding international security, expanding military capability, and projecting influence that undermines regional stability. Currently, China is the United States' adversarial hegemon in the region (Green et al. 2016, 10). China's strategic objectives include safeguarding its sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity, and its core missions in the IOR include HA/DR, counterterrorism, United Nations peacekeeping, noncombatant evacuation, and antipiracy operations. Protection of overseas interests and maritime trade is especially important to China in the IOR (Chase et al. 2015, 25-27). Although at face value China's intentions to maintain secure seas and freedom of navigation along SLOCs appear to align with the intentions of the United States, problems arise when state actors perceive China's actions as aggressive and threatening.

China's claims to the majority of the SCS, as well as its String of Pearls strategy stretching throughout the IOR, will allow China to project naval forces into SLOCs that

are critical for international trade (JCS 2015, 2). China's assertive actions challenge international security in the region and allow China the ability to hinder free commerce and navigation along these SLOCs. For this reason, the Indo-Pacific region is now of greater importance to the United States than the Middle East (CRS 2018, 3). Just last year, to reflect this shift in regional focus, the United States renamed its Pacific Command to the USINDOPACOM, which former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis called the primary combatant command (BBC 2018). This change recognized the enduring security and economic significance of the waterways that connect the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The United States intends to continue protecting freedom of the seas for commerce and military purposes, facilitating peace by deterring conflict, and encouraging the observance of international laws in the IOR (DOD 2015, 1-2).

In the 2015 *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy*, the DOD outlined its four primary lines of effort to achieve these objectives: develop military capabilities and capacity in the region, enhance partner military capabilities and capacity, use diplomacy to reduce risk, and support rule of international law by bolstering security institutions (DOD 2015, 19-33). Some analysts would argue that the current strategy in the IOR is too ambiguous. In *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2017* and during recent summits, President Trump confirmed the significance of the Indo-Pacific region and the importance of protecting security, commerce, and democracy there; however, clear initiatives and approaches toward these ends have not been established. In developing a strategy for the IOR, the United States must consider the interests of India, one of its most essential partners in the region (Ayres 2018). India's primary intentions in the region include security of maritime commerce and energy

routes, freedom of maritime navigation, reinforcement of the UNCLOS, expansion of multilateral naval cooperation and exercises, and power projection of the IN (Limaye 2017, 1-3).

Whether or not the current United States' strategy and lines of effort in the IOR are explicit to all, the initiative to rebalance stability in the region by reinforcing key partners has been made clear. As discussed, China is the United States' greatest challenge in the region. China presents similar security and economic challenges to many other regional actors as well. The United States must find aligning interests with other countries and carefully engage and support those countries in a way that is beneficial to all parties (Till 2014, 13, 31-32). The lines of effort to pursue this gradual regional rebalance include increasing security cooperation, underpinning alliances and partnerships, and establishing mutually recognized rules that support economic and political order and stability (Sutter et al. 2013, 9). This rebalancing strategy was announced in 2012 and has shifted focus over the years. The strategy was initially more focused on countering North Korea but shifted priority to China as China continued to grow economically, modernize its military, and project military power. The strategy has consistently stressed increased security cooperation with regional allies, with a greater focus on deepening the United States' relationship with India starting in 2015. Another common theme in this strategy has been the preference to cooperate, rather than compete, with China (Cordesman et al. 2015, 474-493). Although the United States will continue to pursue areas of cooperation with China, China's true intentions are unknown, necessitating the United States and other powers to keep China's assertive actions in check (Singh 2018).

Cooperative activities between the United States and India are paramount to ensuring stability and security throughout the IOR. China represents a tremendous potential threat to the United States and India due to its enormous GDP and population, as well as its rapid military modernization and growing ability to project military power. Quantitatively, the combined GDPs and populations of the United States and India are greater than China's. Geographically, India's location allows it easy access to the SLOCs and strategic chokepoints of the IOR, which are critical to the security of China's energy imports. Militarily, United States and Indian naval and air forces would have the capacity to control these SLOCs and strategic chokepoints in the event of a major conflict (Tata 2018, 96-99). Although India has historically been opposed to regional alliances, it must consider an enduring partnership with the United States to ensure stability and security in the IOR (Sutter et al. 2013, 47). The United States, in pursuing its rebalance strategy, must consider Indian interests, concerns, and future trade relations with China (Tourangbam and Bhatt 2018). To determine how the United States can effectively reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR using the military instrument of power, the military situation in the region must be explored. Next, in steps 2A and 2B, this study assessed China's military capacity in the region, both capabilities and limitations.

Step 2A: China's Military Capabilities

This study analyzed China's military capabilities by applying the organization, materiel, and facilities domains of DOTMLPF-P. The organization domain concerns how the PLA organizes to fight. The PLA is organized into four service branches: the PLA Army, the PLAN, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), and the PLA Rocket Force. The PLA

support forces include the PLA Strategic Support Force and the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force (SecDef 2018a, 4). The PLA also has a reserve force and the People's Armed Police, which conducts internal security operations. As of 2016, China had five Theater Commands within its territory, each focused on conducting joint operations (Rinehart 2016, 2-3). China has prioritized military modernization since the mid-1980s. During that time, China also focused on reducing the size of the PLA and refining its organizations and systems, as well as developing more highly specialized equipment, personnel, and units (Cordesman et al. 2015, 215). Currently, China is in the process of completely restructuring all branches of the PLA with a focus on facilitating mission command. Lower echelon units and leaders are being prepared to act with greater initiative during combat rather than be completely dependent on higher echelons (SecDef 2018a, 2). The current active force size of 2.3 million is projected to be reduced to less than one million by 2022, with the aim of funding more sophisticated technologies and producing materiel assets for the PLAN and the PLAAF (Micallef 2019).

The branches of the PLA that could have the greatest affect in the IOR are the PLAN and the PLAAF. The PLAN is a formidable maritime force with more than 300 vessels. Its continuous modernization and restructuring points to China's ambitions to extend its operational reach further into the IOR and beyond, as well as increase its capacity to conduct overseas expeditionary activities. Two recent changes that support this notion are the PLAN's heavy investment in amphibious warfare ships and the expansion of the PLAN Marine Corps. By 2020, the PLAN Marine Corps projects to increase from two to seven brigades and from 10,000 to 30,00 personnel. Also focused on increased power projection, the PLAAF is the world's third largest air force. In 2017

alone, the PLAAF built at least six air bases and aligned subordinate brigades under each base (SecDef 2018a, 28-35).

Next, this study looked at the materiel domain of DOTMLPF-P, specifically at what assets the PLAN and PLAAF can project into the IOR. China's rapid economic growth, substantial GDP, and large population has allowed it to invest much into the modernization of its military capabilities. The focus of this effort has been on PLAN and PLAAF power projection throughout the IOR, as well as the development of anti-access/area denial devices and platforms (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 28). The PLAN is focused on the quality and technological sophistication of its vessels, missiles, and systems rather than quantity. The PLAN is fielding new anti-ship ballistic missiles and anti-ship cruise missiles, nuclear-powered ballistic missile and attack submarines, non-nuclear-powered submarines, naval mines, and unmanned underwater vehicles, all of which could be employed against the naval forces of the United States and its allies in a major conflict in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The PLAN has begun building its third aircraft carrier with the estimated goal of constructing a total of six. These aircraft carriers, augmented with carrier-based aircraft and extended-range submarines, can be used to project power throughout the Pacific Ocean and the IOR. PLAN surface vessel modernization efforts have produced new cruisers, destroyers, frigates, corvettes, and fast attack crafts, which are capable of countering other ships, submarines, and aircraft. The PLAN has also invested in amphibious vessels and possibly floating sea bases, which would allow maritime forces to significantly extend their operational reach (O'Rourke 2018, 8-48).

Like the PLAN, PLAAF modernization efforts are focused on high quality assets and long-range power projection. The PLAAF is developing fifth-generation fighters and fielding bombers that offer long-range precision strike ability and can support maritime operations. New transport planes, long-range unmanned aerial vehicles, and long-range air defenses are also being developed (SecDef 2018b 2018, 33-35). China's impressive anti-access/area denial capabilities, which detect and deter unwanted naval, air, and ground activities, also cannot be ignored. The PLA can utilize its sophisticated surveillance system to detect surface ships and employ the aforementioned anti-ship cruise and ballistic missiles, aircraft, surface combatants, and submarines against enemy assets (Heginbotham et al. 2015, 198). Along with these material capabilities, the facilities domain of DOTMLPF-P is also crucial to the PLA as it includes the installations and industrial facilities that support the PLA at home and abroad.

China's BRI, and more specifically its String of Pearls strategy, is the key to its string of military and commercial facilities from which it can project military power into the IOR. China's infrastructure investment and development projects along the coastlines of littoral countries have given it swift access to the SLOCs of the IOR. In doing so, China aims to protect its own maritime commerce routes, but also effectively threatens to interdict the shipping and economic interests of other countries, such as India and the United States. China established a naval base near the city of Sanya, which is on the southern coast of Hainan Island in the SCS. The base has a high concentration of PLAN forces, which have the ability to reach the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Malacca. This deep-sea naval base also has an underground facility with tunnels that can mask the movement of submarines. China plans to construct a canal across Thailand's Kra

Isthmus, which would reduce the length of shipping routes around Southeast Asia. Other facilities include a commercial port in Gwadar, Pakistan on the Arabian Sea, which is only 400 kilometers from the Strait of Hormuz; multiple naval bases along the coastline of Myanmar; multiple facilities on islands throughout the Bay of Bengal that are capable of gathering intelligence; a commercial port in Chittagong, Bangladesh capable of handling cargo containers; and a container port, bunker system, oil refinery, and airport in Hambantota, Sri Lanka (Pant 2014, 15-17). Also in Sri Lanka, China is further developing the country's largest port in Colombo (Samaranayke 2012, 27). China continues to build radar and surveillance systems in Myanmar that can range into the Bay of Bengal (Neuman 2012, 116) and plans to invest in port projects in the Seychelles and Singapore. China has ports from which PLAN and PLAAF assets can access the Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Hormuz, and recent construction of another deep-sea port in Djibouti gives China's armed forces rapid access to the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb, which connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Also of note, the PLAN has expanded its presence in the vicinity of the ports at Gwadar, Pakistan and Djibouti (Micallef 2019). China's military capabilities, to include the organization of its armed forces, the focus on power projection of its materiel assets, and the construction of coastal facilities throughout the IOR, highlight its intentions to control its economic interests in the IOR and beyond. In step 2B, China's military limitations are assessed to further understand the military situation in the IOR.

Step 2B: China's Military Limitations

This study analyzed China's military limitations by applying the organization, materiel, and facilities domains of DOTMLPF-P. The PLA has several organizational

weaknesses that echo across all of its branches. Although the PLA has focused on modernizing its armed forces since the mid-1980s; especially its naval surface combatant, submarine, air, and air defense forces; it has been a gradual and inconsistent process. This is largely a result of the sheer size and compartmentalization of the PLA and because new equipment, systems, and technology are constantly being upgraded. Also, although the PLA is reportedly improving its ability to execute via mission command, non-commissioned officers and junior officers have historically not been empowered to take the initiative during training or combat. The PLA is developing its training exercises, which were previously scripted and did not include valuable after-action reviews of performance. Another organizational weakness is that the majority of PLA personnel lack combat experience (Rinehart 2016, 5, 19-20), which some analysts believe would hinder the PLA from defeating a more experienced peer adversary. The PLA has less joint military experience than the United States military, but more than the Indian military (McDaniel 2012, 34-35). One hindrance to PLA joint operations is strong branch identities with a historical elevation of the ground forces over the other branches and support services. Additionally, the PLA is not well integrated with state or interagency organizations, which some analysts believe contribute to a gap between civilian and military entities. Concerning this gap, civilian leadership provides minimal oversight of the PLA, which may result in military objectives not always being fully nested with national strategy (Chase et al. 2015, 45-51).

PLA limitations also include shortcomings in materiel, specifically in the PLAN and the PLAAF. Limitations of the PLAN include minimal execution of joint operations and interoperability with other branches of the PLA, underdeveloped antisubmarine

warfare assets and systems, and a reliance on other countries for certain ship parts and components (O'Rourke 2018, 4-5). Although China has an impressive capacity to build warships, the PLAN recently deployed its first aircraft carrier, compared to the 17 total aircraft carriers deployed by navies around the world. Also from a quantity standpoint, the United States has 10 aircraft carriers, with one in reserve and three more being constructed (Micallef 2019), as well as many amphibious assault ships that can support fixed-wing aircraft (Heginbotham et al. 2015, 327). Concerning materiel limitations of the PLAAF, China is striving to produce dependable, high performance jet engines that rival those of United States' military aircraft. Although China is developing fifth generation fighters, it currently fields older third and fourth generation fighters, some of which were produced domestically while others were obtained from Russia. Although the PLAAF does have long-range bombers in its inventory, the bombers were fielded during the Cold War and need upgrades. Also, the PLAAF has limited air and sea lift capabilities, which hampers China's ability to project personnel combat power into the IOR (Rinehart 2016, 12-13, 20).

As previously discussed, China has made significant progress in the construction and expansion of coastal facilities throughout the IOR; however, these facilities do not offer the logistical support necessary to sustain the PLAN's warfighting needs. Although the port in Djibouti allows the PLAN to extend to the far west of the IOR, a major maritime conflict would place immense strain on the resupply and reconstitution of PLAN vessels (Chase et al. 2015, 91). China's infrastructure expansion throughout the region is multifaceted. The purpose of these facilities is to expand economic influence, facilitate commerce, protect SLOCs, and potentially to support military operations. Some

experts believe that these facilities would actually be a vulnerability in the event of a major conflict. India's strategic location and access to the IOR would present a serious threat to China, as India could readily cut China's energy supply through the IOR. China would be forced to dedicate a significant PLAN force to the IOR to protect its maritime trade routes, which would create logistical issues due to the distance from mainland China. The PLAN could effectively use long-range submarines and surveillance aircraft to combat the IN and threaten India's energy supply (Cooper 2018), but China would be forced to put forth tremendous effort to support the PLAN and the PLAAF in the IOR, especially if the United States reinforced the Indian military in the region. China understands this limitation, hence its continued coastal infrastructure projects throughout the IOR. Next, this study examined India's military capabilities and limitations using the organization, materiel, and facilities elements of DOTMLPF-P. In steps 2C and 2D, India's military capabilities and limitations were compared to those of China when necessary.

Step 2C. India's Military Capabilities

This study also analyzed India's military capabilities by applying the organization, materiel, and facilities domains of DOTMLPF-P. The service branches of the Indian Armed Forces include the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard. For the purpose of this study, the organization of the IN and IAF were articulated. The IN is organized into the Western Naval Command in Mumbai, the Eastern Naval Command in Vishakapatnam, the Southern Naval Command in Kochi, the Far Eastern Command in Port Blair, and the IN's headquarters in New Delhi (Green et al. 2016, 84). The Western Naval Command conducts operations in the Arabian Sea and has historically been the

focus of the IN, likely due to the threat of Pakistan to India's west (McDevitt 2013, 22). The Eastern Command focuses on operations in the Bay of Bengal, while the Far Eastern Command can readily project naval and air power into the Andaman Sea and south to the Strait of Malacca, which presents a threat to China's energy supply (Pant 2014, 31). The IAF has a total of seven air commands, five of which are regionally aligned and two of which are support commands that provide maintenance and training (Green et al. 2016, 84-85). The IN and IAF are less robust than their PLAN and PLAAF counterparts, in personnel and assets, largely due to China's military modernization efforts backed by defense spending that is approximately three times as large as India's (CRS 2018, 48).

This study's analysis of the Indian Armed Forces' materiel capabilities also focused on Indian naval and air assets. As of January 2018, the IN had 28 naval surface combatants, one aircraft carrier, 14 submarines, and 73 naval combat aircraft, and the IAF had 803 air force combat aircraft (CRS 2018, 48). Although India's intentions concerning national security and defense spending are not clear, it is evident that India is in the process of modernizing the IN and the IAF to extend their operational reach (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 14). India builds its naval and air forces through domestic production efforts and by purchasing assets from foreign states, primarily Russia. IN surface combatants include destroyers from the Soviet Union built in the 1980s, destroyers built domestically in the late-1990s, and modern destroyers also built domestically. India is currently building up to 45 more surface combatants to be prepared to counter the PLAN, but construction is lagging (Limaye 2017, 21-23). To counter the PLAN submarine threat, India has purchased twelve P-8I antisubmarine warfare aircraft since 2009 and plans to purchase a number of P-8 Poseidon aircraft from the United

States (Woody 2018). The IN also has a number of missile frigates, missile corvettes, attack submarines, and one nuclear-powered submarine acquired from Russia in its inventory (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 15). Although the IN has only one aircraft carrier in operation, it has plans to build two more. India is also focused on developing more amphibious ships with which to conduct HA/DR operations (Limaye 2017, 23-26).

Concerning the IAF's materiel assets, the majority of its combat aircraft are ground attack aircraft purchased from Russia and in need of upgrades. Also in the IAF's inventory are fighters purchased from France, airborne early warning aircraft purchased from Israel, in-flight refueling tankers purchased from Russia, and military transport aircraft purchased from the United States (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 15). Also of note, Lockheed Martin recently projected that all F-16 Block 70 wings will be produced by Tata Advanced Systems Limited in Hyderabad, India by 2020. This move in Lockheed Martin's fighter jet wing production to India demonstrates increased defense cooperation between the United States and India (Gady 2018). Lockheed Martin also intends to win a contract to provide the IAF with 110 F-21 fighter jets, which are an upgrade to the F-16 Block 70 version and would also be produced through India's Tata Advanced Systems Limited company (Gady 2019). Although India presents capable naval and air forces with the intent to continue its path toward modernization, its shortcomings in comparison to the PLAN and the PLAAF are prevalent and were discussed in step 2D of this study's research methodology.

India's facilities throughout the IOR were also examined as they relate to military capabilities. India's strategic location and its regionally aligned naval and air commands allow it ready access to the SLOCs and strategic chokepoints of the IOR. In response to

China's String of Pearls strategy and perceived encirclement of India, India has allotted significant funds to further develop the facilities of its Eastern and Far Eastern Naval Commands during the past decade. The Far Eastern Naval Command in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands especially gives India a strategic advantage over China due to its ability to project naval and air combat power east into the Andaman Sea and south to the Strait of Malacca (Samaranayake 2012, 6-10).

Although India's foreign policy and infrastructure projects are not always made known publicly, in 2011 one analyst projected that India had intentions to develop port infrastructure in several coastal states, such as "the Maldives, the Seychelles, Madagascar, Mozambique, Djibouti, and Mauritius". This effort to expand naval facilities throughout the IOR has been coined India's "Necklace of Diamonds" strategy, a clear counter to China's efforts to do the same (Tanner et al. 2011, 41-42). Currently, India is developing a deep-sea port in Chabahar, Iran and has plans to construct naval facilities in Oman, an airstrip and naval jetty in the Seychelles, and a naval base in Singapore. Not surprisingly, these infrastructure projects are located in the vicinity of existing or planned Chinese projects (Chandran 2018). Both powers now seem to be in a race to expand their respective spheres of influence over the SLOCs of the IOR. Step 2D considered India's military limitations, especially relative to China's military capabilities.

Step 2D: India's Military Limitations

This study also analyzed India's military limitations by applying the organization, materiel, and facilities domains of DOTMLPF-P. India's organizational limitations stem from strategic level issues. India's political structure is fractured largely due to its rich cultural diversity with differing regional interests and concerns. This fragmented political

structure often leads to ambiguous direction in national security strategy, which in turn affects defense strategy and spending (Neuman 2012, 119-120). Another strategic level organizational shortfall is India's limited cooperation between senior military and civilian leaders concerning defense spending. Each service of the Indian military forecasts its own spending requirements, which are then open to further negotiations between the politically-charged Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Finance. This results in unclear spending objectives and slow rates of domestic production of military materiel. This negatively affects India's efforts to modernize its armed forces, which is in stark contrast to China's prioritized and rapid modernization efforts of its armed forces (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 11-18).

As previously alluded to in step 2C, the IN and the IAF have significant materiel limitations in relation to China. Concerning military assets, specifically naval and air forces, China clearly has the quantitative advantage over India. As of January 2018, China had approximately three times the number of naval surface combatants, four times the number of submarines, five times the number of naval combat aircraft, and three times the number of air force combat aircraft as India (CRS 2018, 48). Although both China and India have only one aircraft carrier in operation, China is projected to out-pace India in carrier battle group production. The IAF needs modernization, especially its fighter aircraft, as is evident by the 29 IAF fighters and trainer aircraft that crashed between 2012 and 2017 due to operator error or technical faults (Nouwens 2018).

China's superiority in numbers and modernization efforts are largely a result of its tremendous GDP. Although India spent 2.5 percent on defense in 2016, as opposed to China's 1.9 percent, India's GDP was only 41 percent of China's GDP. This trend is

expected to continue; India's GDP is projected to be 47 percent of China's GDP in 2037 (Tata 2018, 99). Another limitation is India's slow and inefficient defense procurement process. This system is characterized by disputes, corruption, and bureaucracy and results in India purchasing the majority of its military assets from foreign sources (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 17-20). India would benefit greatly from improving and streamlining its domestic defense production system. Effective defense production would prevent India from relying so heavily on foreign materiel procurement and technical and technological expertise.

India understands the importance of expanding its facilities throughout the IOR. The establishment of its Far Eastern Naval Command in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands demonstrates the intent to extend operational reach to facilitate security of SLOCs and the Strait of Malacca. As previously discussed in step 2C, India has other infrastructure projects planned throughout the IOR, but its efforts lag behind the progress of China's String of Pearls strategy. Also of note, none of India's existing or planned facilities will allow the IN or the IAF to reach the SCS (Burgess 2013, 11). To help further understand the military situation in the IOR, the following four steps examined the military activities of China and India, both cooperative and contentious in the eyes of the United States.

Step 3A: China's Cooperative Military Activities

To implement the military strategic guidance of active defense in the new situation, China's armed forces will uphold the following principles . . . To actively expand military and security cooperation, deepen military relations with major powers, neighboring countries and other developing countries, and promote the establishment of a regional framework for security and cooperation.

—Xinhua Agency, *China's Military Strategy*

In its most recent military strategy, published in May 2015, China claimed to be committed to military security cooperation with nations from around the world. The document specifically stressed the importance of continued cooperation with Russia and mentioned developing relations with countries in Europe, Africa, Central America, and South America (Xinhua 2015, 9-10, 18). China has also developed relationships with select states throughout the IOR, to include Sri Lanka, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Malaysia, Djibouti, and Pakistan. Although China views activities with these states as cooperative, India and the United States perceive that China's interest in them is centered around their locations in relation to critical SLOCs and land energy routes. China has increased its security and economic support to Sri Lanka, which is an important part of China's BRI. China continues to invest in infrastructure development projects in the Maldives, which owes China the majority of its foreign debt. China's interest in and economic assistance to the Seychelles has increased as a result of India's military exercises conducted and surveillance radars stationed there. Although Bangladesh aims to maintain positive relations with India, the United States, and China, it has accepted massive infrastructure investment projects and arms sales from China. Myanmar is also critical to the BRI, and China has invested much in the state to gain access to land and sea energy routes. China conducts annual military exercises with Malaysia, which is located next to the Strait of Malacca. China has a military centric relationship with Djibouti and established a naval base there that overlooks the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb. This strategic location allows China to extend its operational reach beyond the IOR and into the Mediterranean Sea (CRS 2018, 34-45).

China's partnership with Pakistan is the most alarming to India, as Pakistan is India's primary enduring security threat. Pakistan is integral to the furtherment of China's BRI, both on the Asia subcontinent and in the IOR, as is evidenced by the development of the Gwadar Port in the Arabian Sea. Also to India's angst, China is a major arms supplier to Pakistan, providing Pakistan with tanks, aircraft, small arms, missiles, submarines, naval surface combatants, as well as technology for nuclear weapons (CRS 2018, 34-47). China also continues to conduct cooperative activities with the EU and the United Nations.

The PLAN and the EU Naval Force have conducted joint maritime exercises focused on counterpiracy in the western IOR since 2009, although the PLAN is primarily focused on the Gulf of Aden. This cooperative relationship seems to be cultivating as China invited EU personnel onto its naval base in Djibouti in 2018, which is unheard of (Stanley-Lockman 2018). Additionally, as part of the United Nations Security Council, China contributes more forces to peacekeeping operations than any other permanent member. In 2017, China conducted maritime, air, counterterrorism, missile defense, HA/DR, border security, or peacekeeping exercises with countries such as Nepal, Cambodia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Thailand, Russia, Malaysia, Tajikistan, Belarus, Myanmar, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, the Philippines, Laos, Brunei, Bangladesh, and the United States (SecDef 2018a, 18-21). The United States maintains high-level military contacts with China for "building sustained and substantive dialogue, promoting risk reduction and risk management efforts that diminish the potential for misunderstanding or miscalculation, and building concrete, practical cooperation in areas of mutual interest" (SecDef 2018a, 105). China and the United States, as well as all regional actors,

share the common interest of ensuring that the SLOCs through the IOR remain secure and free for commerce; however, China's assertive actions in the SCS and infrastructure investment projects throughout the IOR have resulted in the potential for conflict rather than panoptic cooperation (Cordesman et al. 2015, 513).

Step 3B: China's Contentious Military Activities

It is the Chinese Dream of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Chinese Dream is to make the country strong. China's armed forces take their dream of making the military strong as part of the Chinese Dream. Without a strong military, a country can be neither safe nor strong.

—Xinhua Agency, *China's Military Strategy*

Military modernization, evident in writing and in practice, is at the crux of China's national security strategy. China feels threatened by the United States' effort to rebalance power through the Indo-Pacific region. China claims its actions throughout the region are to protect its maritime rights and economic interests against the United States and powerful regional neighbors. The PLA will continue to focus its modernization efforts on sophisticated weaponry and equipment, the space and cyberspace domains, information operations, logistics reform, military education, and development of the PLAN and the PLAAF to protect its overseas economic interests (Xinhua 2015, 4-7, 13-15). China's recent and projected rapid military modernization, aggressive actions in the SCS, and widespread infrastructure and militarization projects across the IOR, as peaceful and harmless as China may claim these activities to be, is alarming to many regional powers, especially India and the United States (DOD 2015, 14-15). Competition, if not contention, is expected between China and the United States as China continues to rise as an economic and military global power. Although some security interests between

the two powers do align, China's political system allows it to be less transparent regarding national strategy, military plans, and force modernization, which makes frank communication and cooperation difficult (Cordesman et al. 2015, 22-24).

Just like all regional powers, China is rightfully concerned about the security of the SLOCs in the western Pacific Ocean and IOR (Bo 2018); however, China's approach toward ensuring the safety and security of its maritime trade does not foster stability and trust. Without international coordination, China created an air defense coordination zone in the East China Sea that converged with other nations' airspace, as well as made aggressive sovereignty claims of islands in the SCS (DOD 2015, 31). These activities, along with the results of China's String of Pearls strategy, are contentious because they promote Chinese control of trade passing through SLOCs and expand anti-access/area denial capacity, which limits foreign military operations (St. Pierre 2014, 15-16). China's increased PLAN presence in the IOR also intensifies the potential for kinetic engagements, especially with the IN. Additionally, as stated in step 3A, China's support of Pakistan is another source of contention for India. This partnership magnifies India's security concerns of Pakistan and supports the notion that China is attempting to encircle India. China and Pakistan are India's greatest external threats (CRS 2018, 27-29). To help further understand the military situation in the IOR, steps 3C and 3D reviewed Indian military activities, both cooperative and contentious as perceived by the United States.

Step 3C: India's Cooperative Military Activities

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made great strides toward India's cooperation with other states. Prime Minister Modi has engaged the United States, Japan, China, and Russia as potential aids toward India's national development, as well as

cultivated India's relationships with many of its neighboring littoral states, specifically those in which China has invested heavily (Green et al. 2016, 82). India has a history of conducting naval activities, patrols, and exercises with countries located around the IOR, specifically those whose borders share the Bay of Bengal. Since 1995, the IN has led an exercise series called MILAN, which means "meeting" in Hindi. This exercise, which is a great opportunity for India to demonstrate its prioritization of regional security, has grown to include navies and coastguards from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, the Maldives, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam, Australia, New Zealand, the Seychelles, and Mauritius (Samaranayake 2012, 12-13). The IN has conducted HA/DR operations to assist Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Indonesia, and Myanmar, as well as noncombatant evacuation operations in countries to India's west, such as Yemen (Limaye 2017, 19-20). Additionally, the IN has conducted exercises with the navies of Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. India has also increased engagement with Vietnam, Taiwan, and Japan with the intent to secure access to overseas ports, which would allow the IN to extend its operational reach to counter the PLAN along critical SLOCs (Pant 2014, 32-35). India also has a history of security cooperation with the United States.

Several key aspects to India's cooperative security relations with the United States include defense trade, intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, nuclear counter-proliferation, and annual naval exercises. Although the majority of India's military procurement is projected to come from Russia during the next decade, India has showed interest in, if not signed contracts for, fighter aircraft and ultralight howitzers from the United States. Although the Indian and United States governments have made progress in

sharing intelligence and combating common terrorist threats, India is cautious in these areas due to it not completely trusting United States' intentions and disapproving of the United States' partnership with Pakistan (Kronstadt and Akhtar 2017, 18-21).

India's participation in combined naval exercises is a key measure to hinder China's expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to the exercises previously discussed, the Malabar naval and air exercise series started in 1992 between India and the United States. Japan has participated as the exercise's third permanent partner since 2014 (CRS 2018, 33), with non-permanent exercise partners being Australia and Singapore. This exercise focuses on "antisubmarine warfare, counterpiracy, and disaster response" (Latif 2012, 2), and is a great opportunity for India, the United States, and other regional powers to refine their naval and air interoperability. Although not conducted in the IOR, India also participates in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, led by the United States Navy and conducted every two years around the Hawaiian Islands. It would greatly benefit India and the United States to increase military cooperation due to China's rapid military modernization, projection of combat power and investment projects across the IOR, and vague strategic goals (Latif 2012, 5).

Step 3D: India's Contentious Military Activities

Although Indian military activities in the IOR are not considered contentious by the United States, India does present several issues that may impede the United States' strategy to rebalance stability in the IOR. First, the United States desires India to have a more prominent role in the security of the IOR, but India's vision to this end is uncertain. India's interests to maintain secure maritime trade routes and freedom of navigation align with those of the United States; however, without a formal national security strategy,

defense strategy, or security policy, India has not determined the role it will play in the international efforts toward ensuring regional security and stability (Latif 2012, 3).

Second, India's strong defense trade with Russia presents security concerns for the United States, as Russia is one of the United States' chief adversaries. Although India's relationship with Russia is not as close as it was during the Cold War, India still purchases the majority of its military weaponry and hardware from Russia (Burgess 2013, 11). The United States must be cautious in sharing military technology and equipment with India due to the potential that it could be revealed to Russia. Third, India strives to maintain its strategic autonomy, meaning that India desires to remain strategically independent and not tied to an alliance. India has developed military ties with many nations, as previously examined, but it will not join a military alliance with the United States, or any other nation. At best, the United States and India can strengthen their partnership to ensure security and stability throughout the IOR. Finally, India is understandably concerned with the United States' security cooperation with Pakistan. In the same way that the United States fears that Russia could obtain restricted military information through India, India fears that its military secrets could be revealed to Pakistan through the United States. Although the United States will likely maintain its partnership with Pakistan in the fight against al-Qaeda, it must consider India's apprehensions and interests when seeking to militarily reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR (Valente 2018, 4-5).

Summary

In summary, chapter 4 answered the three subsidiary research questions of this study, listed below for review:

1. What are the strategic intentions of the United States in the IOR, specifically concerning its relationships with China and India?
2. What are the current Chinese and Indian military capabilities and limitations in the IOR?
3. What are the current Chinese and Indian military activities, both cooperative and contentious, in the IOR?

In step one of the research methodology, this chapter explored the strategic intentions of the United States in the IOR. In steps 2A through 2D, this chapter analyzed the military capabilities and limitations of China and India with a focus on the PLAN, the PLAAF, the IN, and the IAF respectively. Steps 3A through 3D examined the cooperative and contentious military activities of China and India in the IOR from the perspective of the United States. Next, following the findings and analysis of the three subsidiary questions, chapter 5 answers the primary research question of this study and offers conclusions and recommendations for decision makers and future researchers.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Following the review and analysis of the extant literature surrounding the primary research question of this study, this chapter concludes that the United States can take several steps using the military instrument of national power to reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR. This chapter offers recommendations for decision makers and for future researchers. In the event of a major conflict in the region, one of China's greatest weaknesses would be the vulnerability of its commercial shipping routes, specifically through the Strait of Malacca. The United States or Indian navies could potentially deny China crucial energy imports from the Middle East by controlling maritime strategic chokepoints (Brands 2018). China understands this potential threat and is countering by modernizing its armed forces and expanding its web of infrastructure throughout the SCS and the IOR, which will allow the PLAN and the PLAAF to project and sustain combat power astride SLOCs and strategic chokepoints. The United States should respond to China's actions by carefully underpinning other regional powers, notably India.

Step 4: Answer the Primary Research Question

To review, the primary research question of the study is: Given that India represents a counterbalance to China in the IOR, how can the United States reinforce that counterbalance from a military standpoint? A reasonable response to this question is that the United States can take steps in assisting India with its strategic and defense planning

efforts, improving upon bilateral and multilateral maritime exercises in the region, strengthening the regional multinational security architecture, and improving the Indian defense production and procurement processes. India's military shortcomings, especially compared to China's military capabilities, must be considered when determining how the United States can best reinforce India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR. China's chief military strengths include the ongoing modernization of the PLAN and the PLAAF and its expansive and continually growing web of infrastructure throughout the IOR. India's foremost military limitations preclude it from becoming a more prominent military deterrent against China in the region. These military limitations include India's ambiguous security and defense goals, its relatively slow and inefficient production and procurement processes, and its vast quantitative and qualitative disadvantages relative to China's armed forces. A review of China's military activities in the IOR revealed that the United States must continue to build dialogue with the PLA to reduce risk and identify aligning areas of interest, especially because China's security and defense strategies are not entirely transparent. An investigation of India's military activities in the region disclosed an opportunity for more intimate defense and security cooperation between India and the United States, encouraging India to be a more credible military deterrent and a more prominent military presence in the IOR.

Recommendations for Decision Makers

Decisions made by the United States concerning military activities with India, specifically concerning the reinforcement of India as a counterbalance to China in the IOR, must be made through careful consideration with Indian decision makers. The United States must not be overly assertive with India when identifying bilateral solutions;

the most effective solutions will safeguard shared national interests and will be reached mutually. The following recommendations to further the defense and security cooperation between the United States and India must also balance between countering China's expansion in the region and excessively provoking China to an elevated conflict.

1. India must clearly define its strategic and defense end states to develop efficient lines of efforts with which to achieve its long-term national objectives. The United States should assist India in developing a clear national security strategy and, in turn, a national defense strategy. The defense strategy should include a clear vision, end states, and lines of effort for the Indian Armed Forces in the IOR. An Indian defense strategy would aid the IN and IAF in developing plans to best employ their capabilities across the IOR, to include guidance on how to pursue bilateral service relationships and interoperability with the United States Navy and Air Force (Latif 2012, ix-x). Clear strategic and defense objectives would also allow Indian military leaders to justify to civilian leaders the need for increased defense spending and military modernization efforts.
2. The United States must encourage India to expand its presence in the IOR, regularly deploying the IN and IAF beyond India's maritime EEZ, to deter the growing PLAN presence in the region. India must be able to project its naval and air power to control SLOCs and strategic chokepoints and interdict China's shipping through the region (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 8-9). The United States can augment this effort by continuing to improve bilateral and multilateral maritime exercises. These exercises should reach farther into the

IOR and train combined forces to deploy rapidly with minimal preparation time to simulate reaction to far away contingency operations. These exercises should be designed to test the operational and logistical capabilities and performance of combined Indian and United States naval and air efforts. Senior Indian and United States government and military leaders and staffs should also participate in strategic tabletop exercises with greater frequency. These exercises should focus on reactions to potential international incidents throughout the IOR, to include counterterrorism, counter piracy, search and rescue, HA/DR, and nuclear counter-proliferation operations, as well as response to armed conflict with China (Neuman 2012, 130-131, 136).

3. It would benefit India to lead more bilateral and multilateral exercises throughout the IOR, whether or not the United States is a participant (Latif 2012, x). Considering China's formidable naval and air forces, in both quantity and sophistication, India needs a strong security architecture throughout the IOR to counter China as a potential threat. The United States plans to reinforce this security architecture through continued bilateral and multilateral naval and air exercises in the region. The United States should encourage its allies and partners in the region to do the same by increasing their defense and security cooperation with India (Pant 2014, 39). Such multilateral cooperation, ideally with India as the lead, will increase the combined situational awareness of India, the United States, and regional partners concerning the maritime and littoral spaces of the IOR. Each nation's strengths and resources should be leveraged to provide the most effective

fusion of naval and air combat power to be prepared to defend and patrol the SLOCs and strategic chokepoints in the region (DOD 2015, 25-26).

4. As India expands its infrastructure throughout the IOR to counter China's String of Pearls strategy, India must ensure it considers the survivability of these forward bases. Survivability efforts include structure hardening, dispersion, camouflage and deception, and air and missile defenses. The United States and India, as well as all regional allies and partners, must integrate air and missile defense systems across the IOR. India must also construct forward deployed stockpiles of munitions and supplies to meet the logistical demands of a potential major conflict in the region. To support, the United States must do the same and be prepared to conduct emergency resupply of Indian military forces in the event that Indian stockpiles are exhausted (Green et al. 2016, 121, 133, 163).
5. To mitigate India's inefficient defense production and procurement processes, the United States should increase its foreign military sales to India, specifically in support of further developing the capacity of the IN and IAF in the IOR. Additionally, the United States can assist in improving India's domestic defense production by providing specialists to work alongside Indian professionals to streamline India's manufacturing management methods and force management process. Lockheed Martin's plan to move F-16 fighter jet wing production to India in 2020 and its effort to win a contract to build 110 F-21 combat aircraft for the IAF in India is a constructive step in this direction. Both of these United States' efforts, foreign military sales and

defense production improvement, should aim at preparing India to field multiple carrier groups and nuclear-powered submarines to extend the IN's operational reach further into the IOR and beyond (Kronstadt and Pinto 2013, 8-9), as well as expanding India's inventory of advanced attack submarines and unmanned underwater vehicles to counter the PLAN's weak antisubmarine warfare capabilities (O'Rourke 2018, 79). To further prepare India to conduct HA/DR operations, the United States should also consider selling India more transport aircraft for the rapid movement of supplies and personnel, as well as equipment to deploy and establish field hospitals.

6. Although it will be difficult to achieve the two-thirds vote needed in the Senate to approve a treaty, the United States should ratify and become a member of the UNCLOS. The United States agrees with and abides by nearly all the terms of the treaty. As a signatory, the United States would have greater influence in "the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, and the International Seabed Authority", as well as have a stronger case when claiming that other signatories, such as China, have defied certain parameters of the treaty (Almond 2017). Although this recommendation does not include use of the United States' military instrument of national power, enforcement of the UNCLOS may involve multinational naval and air efforts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given that India represents a counterbalance to China in the IOR, future researchers exploring the topic of this study should focus on the following research questions:

1. What implications do increased defense and security cooperation between the United States and India have for China? Will increased defense and security cooperation between the United States and India yield amplified Chinese aggression toward the United States?
2. In what ways can the United States afford to create a distance in its defense partnership with Pakistan in order to further build trust with India? On the same token, what confidence-building measures can the United States take for India regarding United States' support to Pakistan?
3. What implications does China's development of hypersonic weapons have for United States' military assets in the IOR and beyond?
4. What barriers exist for increased United States' military sales to India?
5. How can the United States reinforce India in the IOR from a diplomatic standpoint?
6. How can the United States reinforce India in the IOR from an informational standpoint?
7. How can the United States reinforce India in the IOR from an economic standpoint?

Final Thoughts

As suggested in the final three recommendations for future research, although this study explored options to reinforce India from a military standpoint in the IOR, counterbalance efforts beyond the military sphere will also be necessary. Diplomatic, informational, economic, and military power must be used in concert to safeguard national interests and promote global security. Implementation of the recommendations for United States decision makers presented in this study will take time and prioritization of lines of effort during multiple presidential administrations. The United States military, specifically the Navy and Air Force, will need to focus its planning, resourcing, and force allocation efforts on the USINDOPACOM, but not to the detriment of other efforts around the globe. Additionally, the American public will need to understand the importance of the United States' relationship with India and the significance of maritime security in the IOR, as it will be an enduring commitment (Neuman 2012, 139). Due to the maritime nature of this issue, the United States Navy and Air Force will be the primary contributors of combat power, but there will be implications for the United States Army as well. The United States Army may provide ground security for forward bases and logistical nodes throughout the IOR in support of the joint force, as well as deploy expeditionary forces to conduct joint force entry operations and secure key terrain (Kelly et al. 2014, 3). Due to the geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of the IOR to global markets and security, the United States should act in concert with its regional allies and partners to counter China's efforts and shift the balance of power back toward the United States.

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