

DEFENSE DOSSIER

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**THE TRANSFORMATION IN U.S.-INDIA DEFENSE
TIES**

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**American Foreign
Policy Council**

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FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the May 2013 issue of AFPC's *Defense Dossier*. In this edition, we take a look at South Asia, a region that is home to the world's largest democracy and one which runs the risk of being neglected by U.S. defense planners as Washington "pivots" to confronts China's rise and North Korea's belligerence.

South Asia today faces an array of problems, ranging from the threat of Islamic extremism to mounting water insecurity. The United States still lacks a coherent short- or long term approach to the region, but the stakes are enormous. For at the heart of the region lies India, a prime candidate to serve as a strategic partner for the United States, and an indispensable ally in helping to shape regional security.

This edition of the *Defense Dossier* seeks to frame South Asia's complex—and evolving—strategic environment, and highlight the challenges and opportunities it presents to American policy. We hope you find it both timely and useful.

Sincerely,

Ilan Berman
Chief Editor

Richard Harrison
Managing Editor

THE TRANSFORMATION IN U.S.-INDIA DEFENSE TIES

ANIT MUKHERJEE

Opinions on the U.S.-India defense relationship can serve as a geopolitical Rorschach test. In India, anti-American sentiments and opposition to enhanced defense ties are found mainly among the political Left, a vocal but relatively minor section of the Muslim intelligentsia, and die-hard adherents to a misunderstood philosophy of non-alignment. In Washington, opposition to the Indo-U.S. partnership is not as strident, but there is some grumbling from critics who believe the relationship has been oversold and that too many exceptions have been made for India—which, in any case, will never be a true ally.

While fashionable within the Beltway punditry, fortunately this line of thinking finds little traction in government circles, both in Washington and in New Delhi. Critics are, after all, making a straw-man argument: no one proposes that India will enter into an alliance treaty with the U.S. or agree to host U.S. troops. But critics also do themselves a disservice by failing to acknowledge the remarkable transformation that has taken place in U.S.-India defense ties. This phenomenon has been driven primarily by three factors: a convergence of geopolitical interests, a dramatic increase in people-to-people contacts, and the signing of a document called the *New Framework for U.S.-India Defence Relationship*.¹

GRADUAL EVOLUTION

Defense ties between the U.S. and India date back to the early 1960s, when the U.S. provided limited military assistance to the country in the aftermath of the Chinese invasion in 1962. However, defense ties were cut short when the U.S. suspended military aid to both Islamabad and Delhi during the second Indo-Pa-

kistan war in 1965, and virtually disappeared after the 1971 Bangladesh war. While there were some defense contacts during the Reagan years, it was not until the collapse of the Soviet Union that India and the U.S. were able to move beyond their Cold War geopolitical estrangement.

The first few forays into repairing the defense relationship led to the Kicklighter proposals in 1991, and more crucially the Indo-U.S. Agreed Minute on Defense Relations signed four years later. This, as Brian Hedrick explains, “expanded the scope of the bilateral relationship to joint exercises and the possibility of technology transfers.”²

However these agreements and the resulting contacts were hesitant, exploratory and did not amount to anything substantial. India’s second round of nuclear tests in 1998 led to the imposition of further economic and military sanctions, and the defense relationship took a step backward. But in the waning days of his presidency, Bill Clinton initiated a process to transform the bilateral relationship. That effort, led by Strobe Talbott and Jaswant Singh, found bipartisan support in both India and the U.S.

However, it was not until the presidency of George W Bush that the U.S.-India defense relationship began to reach its true potential. A small group of policymakers in both countries were keen to craft a blueprint to guide further military cooperation. Both sides recognized the substantial bureaucratic opposition to their endeavor, and the historical mistrust that continued to inhibit the relationship. The proposed agreement sought to bring clarity to defense ties through

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the formation of a plethora of joint working groups to oversee cooperation. It also sought to give government agencies in both countries the freedom to pursue their respective agendas—from defense trade and cooperation on ballistic missile defense to intelligence sharing.³

The resulting agreement—known as the *New Framework for U.S.-India Defense Relationship (NFDR)*—was signed in June 2005 by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Indian Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee. While this did not fetch much public attention in the U.S., back in India domestic opposition to the deal surfaced immediately after its signing. It was mischaracterized as an agreement that would result in Indian troops operating under American command.⁴ Defense Minister Mukherjee answered critics by explaining that the Framework Agreement was basically an “enabling document” that facilitated defense cooperation and trade and did not lock in the two countries into any formal commitments or obligations. Ten years later, the critics have been proven wrong and Pranab Mukherjee can rightly claim credit for furthering U.S.-India relations.

BENEFITS OF ASSOCIATION

An appraisal of the current defense relationship reveals some of the major achievements of the NFDR. Perhaps its biggest accomplishment is the frequent meetings and exchanges that occur between U.S. and Indian officials. It boosted the level and depth of interaction at a number of joint working groups (for instance, the Defense Policy Group and Defense Procurement and Production Group), and created the Senior Technology Security Group as a way to emphasize the importance of technology security best practices to deepening defense cooperation. This helped in developing familiarity between senior and mid-level officials in both countries. These personal contacts proved critical to navigating the arcane and complex bureaucratic rules and procedures that exist in both countries.

A related achievement has been extensive military-to-military cooperation and joint exercises.⁵ In-

dia currently engages in more military exercises with the United States than it does with any other country

Historians might trace the beginning of this transformation in defense ties to an agreement signed in 2005.

in the world. The exercises have resulted in a working familiarity between military officers of both countries, which is whittling away at the trust deficit the two militaries inherited from decades of Cold War estrangement. The success of the process is evident insofar as the Indian military is increasingly comfortable with, and almost inviting of, greater U.S. military engagement in Asia. Such sentiments would have been unthinkable during the U.S. “tilt” toward Pakistan, or when India was championing the idea of Indian Ocean as a “Zone of Peace” (mainly to oppose U.S. military deployment in the island of Diego Garcia). Instead, in a recent speech, the Indian Army Chief, General Bikram Singh, hailed the United States as a “de facto neighbor” with which the Indian Army was keen to develop “a certain degree of compatibility in operations.”⁶

Another positive development has been in the area of defense trade. In 2003, bilateral trade in this arena was a mere \$300 million. In recent years, however, that figure has surged to a total of \$ 9 billion. Critics do a disservice to this achievement when they focus only on the occasional rejection, as when India chose a European fighter for its Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) in 2012. Some argued at the time that this was evidence that India was not yet willing to significantly invest in U.S. defense technology. But by all indications, the selection made by the Indian Air Force was based strictly on a specific set of technical requirements.⁷ U.S. defense firms, moreover, have already moved on from that episode and are now focused on future opportunities.

These efforts were buttressed by the announcement by the Obama administration in 2011 that the U.S.

would remove nine Indian space and defense-related companies from a sanctions or “entity” list. Though six long years in the making, the decision has opened up a number of opportunities that are currently being explored by the ongoing Defense Trade Initiative (DTI) led on the U.S. side by Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter.

THE ROAD STILL TO BE TRAVELED

While it is important to recognize these achievements there is also merit in asking: what could have been done better? For one, cooperation in ballistic missile defense has proven more challenging than expected—because it is technically complex and very expensive, but also because some in Washington are concerned it could destabilize the region. Intelligence cooperation also seems especially tricky, primarily because intelligence agencies do not trust others with the information they gather. It did not help when, in 2004, the CIA assisted the defection of a senior agent of India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to the United States. On the defense side, meanwhile, there is a need to enhance the linkages between the respective defense intelligence agencies of the two countries.

India currently engages in more military exercises with the United States than it does with any other country in the world.

While counterterrorism cooperation is usually not considered an area for defense cooperation, the common threats facing both countries from certain terrorist groups have made this an area of opportunity. For instance, U.S. troops in Afghanistan have battled Lashkar-e-Taiba—the same group that specifically targeted Americans, Jews and civilians during the Mumbai attacks in 2008—while Indian troops have waged a similar fight in Kashmir. There is perhaps scope for cooperation on this front, then, in identifying terrorist leaders, support structures and discussing methods of interdiction. While this may overlap with existing counterterrorism working groups, additional contacts may enhance the functioning of existing initiatives.

Another potential area for cooperation is in cybersecurity, and the two sides could benefit from working together to emulate best practices, as well as from engaging in greater dialogue on cyber attacks and emergencies.⁸ Finally, cooperation on space-based technology could also be taken up by a joint working group.

EMBRACING A NEW PARADIGM

One of the biggest problems bedeviling U.S.-India defense ties is the issue of “competing exceptionalisms”: a belief in self-images of being exceptional and the problems of working on a relationship that defies definition.⁹ India and the United States are not formal allies, and their ambiguous partnership perplexes some mid-level bureaucrats. India has never had a formal military alliance and the U.S. has never had to engage with a country like India. While senior officials in both countries have, over time, grown to appreciate these sensitivities, it is not at all clear whether this nuance has been internalized by the various bureaucracies and military bodies tasked with implementing the partnership.

Ultimately, as the U.S. draws down from Afghanistan, some tensions are bound to creep into the relationship. Indians fear that either the U.S. will withdraw irresponsibly or place renewed pressure on India to once again accommodate Pakistani demands. But frequent elite exchanges and people-to-people contacts will hopefully help smooth over these problems, while fulfilling the promise of the U.S.-Indian bilateral relationship. If they do, historians might trace the beginning of this transformation in defense ties to an agreement signed in 2005. ■

ENDNOTES

¹ For some contemporary scholarship on U.S.-India relations, see Alan Kronstadt and Sonia Pinto, *India-U.S. Security Relations: Current Engagement* (Washington, D: Congressional Research Service, November 13, 2012) and Ashley Tellis, “Opportunities Unbound: Sustaining the Transformation in US-Indian Relations,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013.

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³ For a text of this agreement see merln.ndu.edu/merln/.../US_India_Defense_Framework.doc; for a good description drawn

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⁴ For a typical perspective, see Achin Vanaik, "Significance of Framework Agreement on Defence," *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* XL, no. 32, August 6, 2005.

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⁶ See event report of lecture by General Bikram Singh, "Challenges for Indian Army in the Twenty First Century," *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses IDSA Eminent Persons Lecture Series*, January 23, 2013.

⁷ See Ashley Tellis, "Decoding India's MMRCA decision," *Force*, June 2011, 8-16.

⁸ A similar recommendation in favor of enhancing international cooperation was made by a Task force on cyber security in India. See IDSA Task Force Report, *India's Cyber Security Challenge* (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2012), 59.

⁹ These themes are explored in Anit Mukherjee and Manohar Thayagraj, "Competing Exceptionalisms: U.S.-India Defence Relationship," *Journal of Defence Studies* 6, Issue 2, April 2012, 12-28.

A NEW ARENA FOR COOPERATION

VICTORIA SAMSON

Many have taken the U.S. goal of pivoting to Asia as a thinly-veiled effort to counter China as it grows in regional and international power. However, the emphasis now being placed on Asia by official Washington can be interpreted in several different ways, one of which could mean putting new efforts into cooperating with other regional powers. India is an excellent case in this regard, as the secular democracy has a strong regional presence, pre-established budgetary commitments to its military and national security concerns, and a decades-long space program.

Two possible areas for cooperation between India and the U.S. include missile defense and space. But while missile defense would be more of a patron-client relationship, collaboration on space would allow for a more peer-to-peer connection—although it, too, comes with its own complications.

SEPARATE WAYS ON MISSILE DEFENSE

Missile defense cooperation, as stated earlier, is unlikely, as the two countries have very different goals for their missile defense programs and are seeking different types of interceptors. The United States is focusing on direct-ascent hit-to-kill warheads, while India is working on interceptors with blast fragmentation warheads. Also, India has made it very clear that it wants to develop its own missile defense system in order to benefit from the ripple effects that such development will have on improvements in its R&D base. Just about the only exception to that is some current cooperation taking place with Israel (via Indian purchases of the Green Pine radar).

There is only small room for collaboration here. The United States has in limited circumstances attempted

to develop missile defense systems with other countries, albeit with varying degrees of success. Its effort with Israel to create the Arrow missile defense system, for example, entailed U.S. development of the interceptor, and Israeli development of everything else. The United States likewise is working with Japan on the most advanced version of its sea-based missile defense system interceptor, although that effort is moving slowly. And the United States tried to develop the Medium Extended Area Defense System (MEADS) with Germany and Italy, but eventually decided unilaterally to back out of the program when its funding priorities changed. Probably the only way that India and the United States could cooperate on missile defense is if India were to buy the various weapon systems from the United States—something that is, at best, a loose definition of cooperation.

ROOM FOR SYNERGY IN SPACE

Space cooperation with India, on the other hand, is much more likely. India is a good potential partner for the United States in this regard because it fits into the U.S. National Space Policy (NSP)'s call for international cooperation with allies. Furthermore, such cooperation would naturally tap into the expertise wielded by India's own, more than half-century-old space program. This kind of effort also would provide a counterbalance for China's space diplomatic outreach, which is being conducted globally by Beijing (albeit not with India).

The appeal for New Delhi is clear. While there is perhaps not competition as such, India is acutely aware of the major Asian space powers (namely China, and Japan) and their efforts—and eager to keep pace

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with them. Having a special, near-peer relationship with the United States on something as prestigious as a space program would be something of great interest to India because of the message it would send in Asia and beyond.

India has made it very clear that it wants to develop its own missile defense system in order to benefit from the ripple effects that such development will have on improvements in its R&D base.

There are issues which could possibly derail cooperation, however. The first is perhaps the most basic: a lack of awareness as to what each country can bring to the table. The United States is seeking partners for its space situational awareness (SSA) program globally (due to physical limitations as to what can be detected from U.S. territory) and India would seem a natural fit. Yet it is unclear what sorts of capabilities India would be able to contribute. Something as basic as a fact sheet about India's SSA capabilities would be tremendously helpful in moving forward on identifying issues where the two countries could cooperate.

That leads into the next concern: do New Delhi and Washington's space priorities align? SSA is of great interest to the United States, and Washington has proven it is willing to allocate a large amount of resources in both effort and expense to shore up these capabilities. The United States has already invested quite heavily in its SSA assets and wishes to maintain them, while the Indians would be starting more or less at the very beginning. Does New Delhi put the same amount of weight upon developing its SSA capacity? Moreover, given the discrepancy in the two countries' spending on space, would India want to expend its relatively smaller amount on an issue it has not identified to be a major domestic priority?

One of the problems in trying to cooperate with India on defense or military use of space is that it is unclear

about who is responsible for that portfolio in India. India typically has used its space program for national development purposes, and the organization in charge of it is the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), which is civilian in mandate. But India's military is increasingly involved in its space program and seeking out capabilities from its existing space assets, raising the question of who would be in charge of India's military or security efforts in space.

There is also the issue of exactly who in the United States would work with India on space. The U.S. military, for example, has taken the lead on the SSA mission. This raises some potentially troubling political optics, since it would force a civilian space agency like ISRO to work with the U.S. military.

The Indians aren't the only ones who have to think about domestic appearances. The United States' space industrial base is very worried about its future during a time when the U.S. government is paring back its space expenditures. How well would shifting funding away from domestic recipients to Indian subcontractors be perceived in such an environment? Similarly, U.S. export control reform will also affect how much and to what extent the United States can cooperate on space. While satellite export controls were initially begun in response to Chinese space efforts, they have had the unintended consequence of greatly limiting U.S. satellite exports in general. The United States has already taken steps to make it easier to cooperate with Indian entities on space, and has also started to modify its export regulations. However, it is as yet unclear how much effect these reforms will have, and it remains to be seen how much it will free up the U.S. satellite industry.

ALL EYES ON CHINA... AND ASAT CAPABILITY

China's anti-satellite (ASAT) testing has strongly influenced Indian interests in space. Before China's shoot-down of one of its own weather satellites in 2007, only the United States and the then-Soviet Union had tested ASAT weapons. Both countries, however, had stopped doing so during the Cold War (with the last

such test carried out by the United States in 1985). China's 2007 ASAT test destroyed the satellite at an altitude of 863 kilometers, leaving over 3,000 pieces of trackable debris in a highly populated orbit. Because of both the debris and the weapon-testing precedent set as a result, the international community sharply criticized China. Indian government officials created an Integrated Space Cell that they hoped would allow for a coordinated approach among military space needs and abilities.

Furthermore, the head of India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), V.K. Saraswat, has spoken often about how the country's missile defense system could serve in an ASAT capacity if needed. While this does not translate into official state policy, it does provide a glimpse into the calculations of India's military planners as to what sorts of capabilities they believe they may need in the future.

This kind of effort [space cooperation] would provide a counterbalance for China's space diplomatic outreach.

This, of course, does not automatically mean that India is planning on developing an active ASAT program of its own. However, New Delhi may have learned a lesson from both the United States and China on how to effectively test an ASAT capability but not draw ire from the global community. The United States shot down one of its own satellites in 2008, ostensibly because there was concern about toxic fuel in an errant de-orbiting satellite, but this move was perceived by many as a response to China's ASAT test the year before. The United States modified one of its sea-based missile defense interceptors to make the intercept with the satellite, and made sure to do so at an altitude that was low enough that debris created from the intercept would de-orbit quickly and not threaten other satellites in the vicinity.

Subsequently, in January 2010, China conducted another test, dubbed a "missile defense test" though

it used the same interceptor as it had during its 2007 ASAT test. That terminology mattered: because it was officially a missile defense test, Beijing did not receive any criticism for its effort. It then held what it called another missile defense test in January 2013 (the type of interceptor used during this test is unknown). There is concern that a norm is emerging where ASAT capabilities are being tested under the official cover of being "missile defense" tests.

Not surprisingly, there have been rumors of Indian officials expressed interest in holding such a test of their own—likely under the guise of testing their missile defense capabilities. India is very worried that some sort of ASAT ban will be worked out in the international community before it has a chance to hold its own test, thereby preventing it from being grandfathered in as a pre-existing ASAT state. Many in India still resent that the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) divided the world between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, and they believe (probably rightfully so) that if India had tested a nuclear weapon early enough, it would be officially considered to be in the former camp. This lesson has been taken to heart by many Indian strategists.

CONSTRAINTS ON SPACE CONDUCT

Another issue which India is keeping a close eye on is the international community's efforts to draft a Code of Conduct for outer space activities (CoC). Initially proposed by the European Union, this document attempts to lay out what would be considered responsible behavior by space actors in an effort to solidify international norms for a stable and predictable space environment. It is still being discussed internationally. Many of the major space actors have viewed this effort in positive terms; the United States, for example, has said that it generally supports the idea of a CoC. The Indian space policy community, by contrast, was at first extremely dubious about what this effort would actually accomplish. Their concerns ran the gamut, from suspicions that the Western world was attempting to write the rules for its own benefit, to a desire for a formal legal treaty

instead of a non-legally-binding agreement.

Over the past year, however, Indian experts have become more involved in CoC negotiations, partially because they presumably see some benefit to making sure India has representation in these discussions, but also because there appears to be growing recognition that something like a CoC would be considered useful and acceptable to India. If this is the case, India and the United States would be well advised to work together on creating an agreement that is beneficial to all space actors, and India's participation could help sell the agreement to non-Western space powers.

THE WAY FORWARD... IN SPACE

The United States is looking for partners to help carry out its pivot toward Asia, and India is in the process of expanding its space program to include military missions. Cooperation in space would be a great way to formalize this relationship and allow it to mature still further. However, before such efforts are undertaken, it would behoove both countries to figure out what exactly they would be willing to cooperate on in space, and to ascertain what their end goals are for this cooperation.

Otherwise, we run the risk of working at cross-purposes and squandering an excellent opportunity. ■

SOUTH ASIA AND THE OBAMA DOCTRINE

LAMONT COLUCCI

There has been much talk about the “pivot to Asia” as if it is something novel or new. In truth, however, U.S. foreign policy has been engaged in a pivot to Asia ever since Commodore Perry sailed under orders given to him by President Millard Fillmore in 1853 to open up Japan. Missing in the current approach, however, has been discussion about South Asia, except when South Asian states (namely Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh) intersect with issues related to Central Asia and the war in Afghanistan.

That represents a serious error. The United States will need to successfully navigate long term interests in South Asia in order to successfully have a grand strategy in the 21st century. Although the smaller states of South Asia pose potential security concerns for the U.S. insofar as rampant poverty, corruption, and civil war threaten to turn them into failed states, the primary foreign policy and national security issues in South Asia are concerned with Pakistan and India. Issues between the United States and the region can be primarily divided into short to mid-term strategies and problems, and those related to long-term grand strategy that will last much of the century.

AMERICA’S APPROACH

The national security strategy of the Obama administration has mixed and matched the weakest aspects of three past administrations. This new doctrine channels Nixon to achieve his burden-sharing, colloquially known today as “leading from behind.” It invokes Carter’s multilateralism for the sake of the same, and as a counter to charges

of American Exceptionalism. From the Clinton years, the Obama administration has summoned a risk-averse policy, while placing its faith in globalization and its worship of technocracy over ideals. The key to the Obama Doctrine is the need to “rebalance American commitments,” code for managing our decline. The Obama doctrine is more about process than strategy.¹

Short to Midterm

In the short- to mid-term, America’s primary concerns relate to terrorism and religious extremism. The Obama administration has attempted “to advance regional security and stability” by supporting “... the development of sovereign, stable, democratic nations, integrated into the world economy and cooperating with one another.”² Through programs like the Counterterrorism Finance (CTF) unit and The Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), the Obama administration has attempted to assist both India and Pakistan in combating terrorism and enhancing cooperation among law enforcement and intelligence agencies. However, the real core issue is Islamic extremism in and around Pakistan. The Obama administration’s primary response to this has been drone strikes, which are designed to decimate high value terrorist targets and degrade their leadership and operational capability. According to the New America Foundation, there have been 428 drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004, killing up to 3,251 terrorists.³ The fantastical quality to this whole situation is the inability and unwillingness of the Pakistani government to crackdown on the myriad of Islamic extremist

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groups, such as the Haqqani network that aids and assists the Taliban and groups linked to al-Qaeda. Since 2007, these groups have formed an umbrella organization under the name Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and they are estimated to have thirty to thirty five thousand militant members.⁴ Moreover, as documented by veteran reporter Bob Woodward in his book, *Obama's Wars*, there are 150 known terrorist training camps inside Pakistan that the United States has yet to destroy.⁵ The ability of the Taliban to find safe havens in Pakistan has blunted any gain that might have existed from the limited "surge" that President Obama ultimately agreed to in December of 2009, right at the time that he issued the date of withdrawal from the country.

The key to the Obama Doctrine is the need to "rebalance American commitments," code for managing our decline. The Obama Doctrine is more about process than strategy.

A greater problem than perhaps even the Islamic Extremist groups is the scandal-ridden Pakistani intelligence service, the ISI. It would be difficult to find another intelligence service upon which the United States has had to rely that is more pernicious and duplicitous than the ISI. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into all the intricacies of the ISI, but it is unquestionably part of the strategic equation for the United States in the region. In plain language, the ISI, the "state within a state" in Pakistan, is an intelligence service that has sponsored and continues to sponsor Islamic extremism to meet the goals of the Pakistani state. The U.S. has been forced into a partnership with this organization to fight the very extremists that elements of the ISI supports. Likewise, the ISI impedes democracy in Pakistan by exercising exponential power over the state that it is supposed to serve.⁶

Long Term

The long term strategic problem for the United States in South Asia, by contrast, lies in two realms. The first concerns the nuclear arsenals of Pakistan and India, and the second is over great power conflict in and around the Indian Ocean. The Obama administration has failed to understand that successful foreign policy and national security can only be conducted with a comprehensive and long term approach to grand strategy. As a result, the Obama administration has sent two signals that may impede successful American grand strategy in South Asia. The first is the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Regardless of the debate about the invasion and counter-insurgency itself, there is a separate question of how the withdrawal affects great-power relations. America's impending withdrawal indicates an unwillingness to see the problem toward its desired ending: stability in Afghanistan. This is particularly worrying to India, which has long been a victim of Pakistani-sponsored extremism. The second is great concern, in India in particular, is that the Obama administration has leaned too far toward China.⁷

The strategic nuclear question is paramount. Pakistan possesses between 90 and 110 nuclear weapons and has likely been a nuclear state since the early 1990s thanks to the efforts of its most notorious nuclear scientist, AQ Khan. Khan was also responsible for nuclear proliferation to North Korea, Iran, and Libya.⁸

The next long term issue concerns great power conflict. There are a multitude of scenarios that presage potential unrest. The unsettled border between China and India continues to be a source of skirmishes and tension between the two, with China being ever-more aggressive in its claims.⁹ Disputes over the Line of Control and tensions over Jammu and Kashmir between Pakistan and India make a South Asian solution to Islamic extremism unlikely. But the area where the United States could find itself in direct strategic conflict is the Indian Ocean. Some have even suggested that

India may use its rise to naval greatness as a way to cut off China from oil supplies by creating a “metal chain” to lock shut the western entrance of the Strait of Malacca.¹⁰

The military equation is complex—and troubling. India has five primary naval bases in the Indian Ocean region: Mumbai, Karwar, Kochi, Visakhapatnam, and Port Blair (Andaman Islands), and currently deploys one aircraft carrier with a plan for two more.¹¹ Pakistan has one primary naval base in the Indian Ocean region near Karachi. There are several Chinese-built ports and refueling stations in the Indian Ocean region: Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Chittagong (Bangladesh), and Sittwe (Burma/Myanmar). The United States, meanwhile, has one primary naval base in the Indian Ocean region: Diego Garcia (British Indian Ocean Territory).¹² The U.S. Fifth and Seventh Fleets dominate this area of operations. The potential for conflict here is immeasurable, especially in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. This could prove even more dangerous should the Chinese become more aggressive in their claims in the South China Sea.

NAVIGATING THE REGION

The U.S. Maritime strategy of 2007 states, “Credible combat power will be continuously postured in the Western Pacific and the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean to protect our vital interests, assure our friends and allies of our continuing commitment to regional security, and deter and dissuade potential adversaries and peer competitors.”¹³ In order for this President Bush-era declaration to have teeth now and in the future, however, a series of micro and macro decisions need to be made, most of which are not in line with the Obama Doctrine.

The ability of the Taliban to find safe havens in Pakistan has blunted any gain that might have existed from the limited “surge” that President Obama ultimately agreed to in December of 2009.

These include deeper involvement on countering Islamic extremism in the region, and most of all greater coordination with South Asian states in maintaining security in the Indian Ocean, the geopolitics of which increasingly have become affected by China’s regional rise and associated instability.

The stakes are high. If South Asia becomes another in a series of Obama Doctrine failures, it will only be one of many, the legacy of which will be costly to repair. ■

ENDNOTES

¹ For more, see Lamont Colucci, *The National Security Doctrines of the American Presidency, How They Shape Our Present and Future* (Praeger Security International, 2012).

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SOUTH ASIA'S GROWING WATER INSECURITY

BRAHMA CHELLANEY

Asia is the world's most-resource-poor continent, and its resource-security challenges place its continued economic rise at risk. Asia's overexploitation and degradation of natural resources has created an environmental crisis, which, in turn, is contributing to regional climate change. For example, the Tibetan Plateau, with its towering height, is warming at a rate almost twice as fast as the rest of the world.

Of all the Asian subregions, it is South Asia that confronts the most serious resource challenges. It is very energy-poor, and will remain largely dependent on oil and gas imports by sea from the increasingly unstable Persian Gulf for the foreseeable future. But it is water, the most important resource for socioeconomic development, which represents what is perhaps the biggest emerging resource flashpoint in the region.

COMPARATIVE DISADVANTAGE

South Asia has virtually the same land area as Central Asia, but a population that is more than 18 times larger. Yet its water resources are barely six times greater than those of the latter. In global terms, the countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) account for about 22 percent of the world's population, but make do with barely 8.3 percent of the global water resources.

If there is any good news, it is that South Asia is the only region, other than North America, where inter-riparian relations are governed by

bilateral treaty arrangements. India, for example, has a water-sharing treaty with each of the two countries located downstream to it—Pakistan and Bangladesh.

This puts South Asia in a minority. Of the 57 transnational river basins in Asia, only four are subject to treaties covering water sharing or other institutionalized cooperation. These are the Mekong (where the nonparticipation of China, the dominant upper riparian, has stunted the development of a genuine basin community), the Ganges (between Bangladesh and India), the Indus (between India and Pakistan), and the Jordan (a four-nation basin whose resources are the subject of a treaty arrangement restricted to Israel and Jordan).

The only Asian treaties that incorporate a specific sharing formula on cross-border river flows are those covering the Indus and Ganges. Both these treaties set new principles in international water law: the 1996 Ganges pact guarantees Bangladesh an equal share of the downstream flows in the most-difficult dry season, while the earlier 1960 Indus treaty is the world's most generous water-sharing arrangement, under which India agreed to set aside 80.52 percent of the waters of the six-river Indus system for Pakistan, keeping for itself only the remaining 19.48 percent share. (By way of comparison, the volume of water thereby earmarked for Pakistan is more than 90 times greater than the 1.85 billion cubic meters the U.S. is required to release to Mexico under the 1944 U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty.)

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Measures taken by one nation or province to augment its water supply or storage capacity often adversely affect downstream basins, stoking political or ethnic tensions.

Nevertheless, given the intensifying water stress in large parts of South Asia, both domestic and interstate water disputes have proliferated. Measures taken by one nation or province to augment its water supply or storage capacity often adversely affect downstream basins, stoking political or ethnic tensions. Plans to build dams have only promoted the “securitization” of water. Once only an environmental issue, water has emerged as a major strategic concern.

A CHALLENGE FROM CHINA

The extent of water stress varies between and within countries. The annual per capita water availability in Bangladesh averages a relatively impressive 8,153 cubic meters, but it has fallen to a paltry 1,539 cubic meters in India and 1,404 meters in Pakistan, according to United Nations data.¹ India, having accepted a sharing treaty of indefinite duration with Pakistan, confronts a massive 52 percent deficit between water supply and demand in its own Indus basin, according to the 2030 Water Resources Group, an international consortium of private social-sector organizations formed to provide insights into worldwide water issues.²

Lost in such water diplomacy is the fact that India is downriver to China, which—far from wanting to emulate India’s Indus- or Ganges-style water munificence—rejects the very concept of water sharing. Indeed, China does not have a single water-sharing treaty with any neighbor.

Instead, the Chinese construction of upstream dams on international rivers, such as those announced recently on the Salween, the Brahmaputra, and the Mekong, demonstrates that it is increasingly bent

on unilateral actions, impervious to the concerns of downstream nations. Over the next decade and a half, China plans to build more *large* dams than the U.S. has managed in its entire history.³

By seeking to have its hand on Asia’s water tap through an extensive upstream infrastructure, China challenges India’s interests far more than those of any other country. Although a number of nations stretching from Vietnam to Afghanistan receive waters from the Chinese-controlled Tibetan Plateau, the Tibetan waters flowing directly into India are greater in volume than the combined flows to the other downriver countries.

With multiple important rivers flowing in from the Tibetan Himalayan region, India gets one-third of all its yearly water supplies of 1,911 cubic kilometers from Tibet. But if one looks at just northern India—the country’s heartland—more than half of its river waters originate in Tibet. An extensive Chinese water infrastructure in Tibet thus will have a serious effect on India.

INDIA’S DILEMMA

India therefore faces some difficult choices in order to address its water crisis. Its ambitious plan to link up its major rivers has remained only notional for more than a decade. The idea was to connect 37 Himalayan and peninsular rivers in a pan-Indian water grid to fight shortages. Although the grid was ridiculed by the ruling party’s heir-apparent, Rahul Gandhi, as a “disastrous idea,” the country’s Supreme Court ordered last year that it be implemented in “a time-bound manner.”⁴

Will that really happen? The experience of the Supreme Court-overseen Narmada Dam project in the western Indian state of Gujarat doesn’t leave much room for optimism. India has struggled for decades to complete Narmada, a project designed to produce less than seven percent as much hydropower as China’s Three Gorges Dam, which was fully completed last year.

With water increasingly at the center of

interprovincial feuds in India, the Supreme Court has struggled for years with water cases, but the parties keep returning to litigate again on new grounds. Plans for large water projects in India usually run into stiff opposition from influential nongovernment organizations, so that it has become virtually impossible to build a large dam, blighting the promise of hydropower.

Proof of this was New Delhi's 2010 decision to abandon three dam projects on the Bhagirathi River, a source stream of the Ganges in the Himalayas. One of these was already half-built; hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted. The largest dam India has built since independence is the 2,000 megawatt Tehri on the Bhagirathi.

A central issue facing Asia is not readiness to accommodate China's rise but the need to persuade China's leaders to institutionalize cooperation with their neighbors on shared natural resources.

Compare that with China's 18,300 megawatt Three Gorges or even Pakistan's Tarbela Dam or the new 7,100-megawatt one at Bunji whose construction it has awarded to Chinese companies. China's proposed Metog Dam, near its disputed border with India, is to produce nearly twice as much power as Three Gorges Dam.

Meanwhile, India's proposed river-linking plan seems like a dream: a colossal network to handle 178 billion cubic meters of water transfers a year in 12,500 kilometers of new canals, generating 34 gigawatts of hydropower, creating 35 million hectares of irrigated land and expanding inland navigation. This is the kind of program that only an autocracy like China can implement. Government agencies say that by 2050 India must nearly double grain production, to over 450 million tons a year, to meet the demands of prosperity and population growth.⁵ Unless it has more irrigated land and adopts new plant varieties

and farming techniques, India is likely to become a net food importer before long—a change that will roil the already-tight world food markets.

AVOIDING WATER CONFLICT

More broadly, a central issue facing Asia is not readiness to accommodate China's rise but the need to persuade China's leaders to institutionalize cooperation with their neighbors on shared natural resources. China already boasts more dams than any other country in the world. And its rush to build yet more dams, especially giant ones, promises to roil relations across Asia, fostering greater competition for water and impeding the already slow progress toward institutionalizing regional cooperation and integration. If China continues on its current course, prospects for a rules-based order in Asia could perish forever.

South Asian states, for their part, must focus on three key areas to try and mitigate their water crisis. One is achieving greater water efficiency and productivity gains. Another is using clean-water technologies to open up new supply sources, including ocean and brackish waters and recycled wastewater. The third is expanding and enhancing water infrastructure to correct regional and seasonal imbalances in water availability, and to harvest rainwater, which can be a new supply source to ease shortages.

Boosting water supplies demands tapping unconventional sources and adopting nontraditional approaches. Improving water-supply management calls for abandoning the business-as-usual outlook. ■

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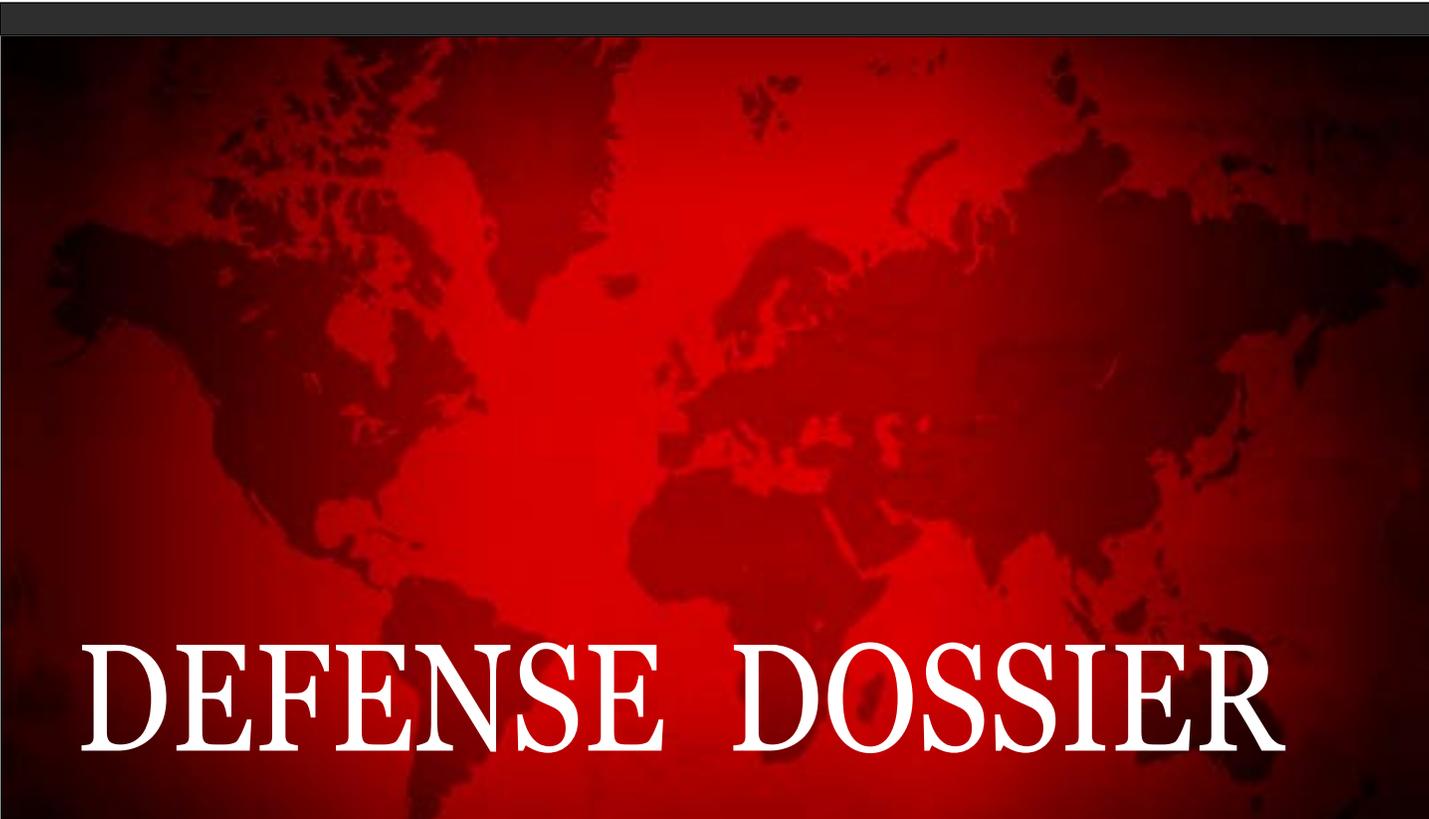
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