Look East, Cross Black Waters

India's Interest in Southeast Asia

Jonah Blank, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Angel Rabasa, Bonny Lin

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Preface

As the United States shifts its security posture eastward in an "Asian rebalancing," a key piece of the reconfigured puzzle will be that of India. With the world's third-largest military, a near-triad nuclear arsenal, and one-sixth of the planet's population, India cannot help but figure prominently into America's geostrategic security vision for the coming decades. India's interests in Southeast Asia, therefore, are of vital concern for America's Asian rebalance and its broader global goals.

A U.S. strategy for the Asia-Pacific region must be based on a better understanding of the potential conflict and alignment of the strategic objectives in Southeast Asia of the United States, India, and China. Considerable work has been done on China's goals and objectives, but those of India remain far less understood. This is partly due to India's own strategic vagueness: Indian policy toward Asia in general, and Southeast Asia in particular, is very much a work in progress, and this progress is still in its early stages. India's relationship with Japan is entering a particularly dynamic phase, and this report does not aim to examine the totality of India's "Look East" policy; instead, it focuses on Southeast Asia—an area in which India's engagement has deep historical roots but remains very far from reaching its potential.

Security strategists in the United States and other nations need a more accurate and nuanced understanding of India's policy—and of the political, economic, technological, and cultural constraints keeping Indian policy from developing more rapidly. Such constraints include a political system in which the demands of domestic constituencies typically outweigh the incentives of foreign policy boldness, a budgetary

system in which funding for security priorities often has weaker political support than do competing priorities such as agricultural or fuel subsidies, and a decisionmaking culture shaped by Nehruvian Non-Alignment that still bears the memories of India's humiliation at the hands of China when the two Asian giants last fought in 1962. The election in May 2014 of a Bharatiya Janata Party government with a historic parliamentary majority will enable the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to push against some of these constraints, but not to remove them. While Modi is the first Indian leader in 30 years free to govern without coalition partners, he focused his campaign almost entirely on domestic issues; his administration took office with neither a mandate nor a clear desire for radical departure from India's traditional positions.

India's policy toward Southeast Asia will still be torn in two directions: On one hand, the Look East program initiated in 1992 has been upheld by all Indian governments since; on the other hand, Indian politics have generally been inward-looking for centuries—a tendency exemplified by the traditional belief that crossing the *kala pani* ("black waters," the oceans to India's east, west, and south) would result in the loss of caste. These two tendencies—engagement and isolation—remain in conflict today, and their contention is likely to shape Indian policy for decades to come.

This study builds on past RAND Corporation work, much of it conducted for the United States Air Force (USAF) under Project AIR FORCE, including:

- Eric Heginbotham, Angel Rabasa, and Scott Harold, *Frontline Southeast Asia: U.S.-China Competition for Political-Military Influence*, unpublished RAND research, March 2013.
- Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Non-Traditional Threats and Maritime Domain Awareness in the Tri-Border Area of Southeast Asia: The Coast Watch System of the Philippines*, OP-372-OSD, 2012.
- James Dobbins et al., *What's the Potential for Conflict with China, and How Can It Be Avoided?* RB-9657-A, 2012.
- Charles Wolf et al., *China and India, 2025: A Comparative Assessment*, MG-1009-OSD, 2011.

- Julie S. DaVanzo, Harun Dogo, and Clifford A. Grammich, *Demographic Trends, Policy Influences, and Economic Effects in China and India Through 2025*, WR-849, 2011.

In addition to these documents, this report draws on the unpublished or not publicly released work of colleagues including David R. Frelinger, Joy Laha, Benjamin S. Lambeth, Andrew Scobell, and Katharine Watkins Webb.

The research reported here was commissioned by the U.S. Air Force's Director of Operational Plans (AF/A5X), Assistant Vice Chief of Staff (AF/CVA), and Deputy Under Secretary for International Affairs (SAF/IA), and conducted within the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE as part of a fiscal year 2013 project "India's Interest in Southeast Asia."

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Contents

Preface iii
Figures xi
Tables xiii
Summary xv
Acknowledgments xxix

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction 1
Background 1
The Policy Problem 4
Purpose of This Document 4
Organization 4

CHAPTER TWO
Why Does India's Interest in Southeast Asia Matter to the United States? 7
Congruence of Indian and U.S. Goals in Southeast Asia 9
Implications for U.S. Strategy of "Asian Rebalancing" 14
Implications for Overall U.S.-India Relationship 15
Implications for U.S. Burden-Sharing and Cost Savings 19

CHAPTER THREE
What Is India's Strategy Toward Southeast Asia? 23
Background to India's Strategy: Ancient Culture, Non-Invasive Politics ... 23
Elements of Indian Strategy: Connectivity, Trade, Energy, Diplomatic

Institutions, Security Cooperation, Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief, Balancer for China 37

CHAPTER FOUR

How Is India's Strategy Being Implemented in Southeast Asia? 79
Singapore 82
Vietnam 88
Myanmar/Burma 96
Thailand 108
Malaysia 115
Indonesia 123
Philippines 133
Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos 138
Conclusion 139

CHAPTER FIVE

Is Southeast Asia an Arena for Sino-Indian Rivalry? 143
China's Strategic Interests and Activities in Southeast Asia 145
How Does China Regard India's Presence in Southeast Asia? 149
Concerns of Potential Encirclement Do Not Drive Chinese Policy 152
How Does India Regard China's Presence in Southeast Asia? 158
What Are Some Potential Sparks of Sino-Indian Confrontation? 162
How Might India Respond in Southeast Asia to Provocations Elsewhere? 166

CHAPTER SIX

India's Internal Politics, 2014–2030: Impact on Policy Toward Southeast Asia 169
Near Term (2015–2019): Broad Trends During the Modi Administration 171
Medium Term (2019–2030): Coalition Governments May Be Reversion to Norm 183
Impact of Regional Parties on Southeast Asia Policy 191
Impact of Domestic Politics: Likeliest Post-2014 Scenario Is Slow, Steadily Increasing Engagement 197

Impact of Domestic Politics: Lower-Probability Alternate Scenario—
Indian Pullback from Southeast Asia 199
Impact of Domestic Politics: Lower-Probability Alternate Scenario—
Increased Sino-Indian Rivalry in Southeast Asia 200

CHAPTER SEVEN
Key Findings and Recommendations 203
Key Findings 203
Recommendations 214
Concluding Thoughts 226

Abbreviations 229

Bibliography 233

Figures

2.1. Map of India and Southeast Asia 8
3.1. Direct Flights from India and China to ASEAN Nations..... 44
3.2. Andaman and Nicobar Island Bases..... 60
3.3. Framework for Examining India's Engagement with Southeast Asia..... 77
3.4. Summary of India's Engagement with Singapore..... 77
4.1. India's Engagement with Southeast Asia at a Glance..... 81
4.2. Summary of India's Engagement with Singapore..... 83
4.3. Singapore's Trade with India, China, and the United States.. 84
4.4. Summary of India's Engagement with Vietnam 89
4.5. Vietnam's Trade with India, China, and the United States..... 91
4.6. Summary of India's Engagement with Myanmar..... 96
4.7. Myanmar's Trade with India, China, and the United States... 100
4.8. Myanmar's Arms Purchases from Top Seven Suppliers..... 109
4.9. Summary of India's Engagement with Thailand..... 109
4.10. Thailand's Trade with India, China, and the United States.... 111
4.11. Summary of India's Engagement with Malaysia..... 115
4.12. Malaysia's Trade with India, China, and the United States.... 118
4.13. Summary of India's Engagement with Indonesia..... 124
4.14. Indonesia's Trade with India, China, and the United States... 125
4.15. Summary of India's Engagement with the Philippines..... 133
4.16. Philippines Trade with India, China, and the United States... 134
4.17. India's Engagement with Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos..... 138
5.1. Engagement of India and China with Southeast Asia..... 144
5.2. Trade of India and China with Key Southeast Asian Nations..... 155
5.3. Sino-Indian Line of Actual Control..... 163
5.4. "String of Pearls"..... 165

Tables

3.1. Indian and Chinese Exercises with ASEAN Nations 62
6.1. Comparison of Congress and BJP Lok Sabha Seats, 2009 and 2014 185
6.2. Comparison of India's Two Major Parties 188
6.3. Comparison of India's Major "Swing" Parties 192
6.4. Comparison of India's Regional Parties with Southeast Asia Impact 193
6.5. Indian Diaspora in Southeast Asia 196

Summary

In U.S. strategic planning, there may be no region where a strong understanding of India's goals is of greater importance than Southeast Asia.[1] The country's "Look East" policy, a plan for increased engagement with both Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, will have a significant effect on the United States' Asian rebalancing: As President Obama noted, "We see America's enhanced presence across Southeast Asia . . . in our welcome of India as it 'looks east' and plays a larger role as an Asian power."[2]

The world's two largest democracies have core security interests that show far more significant points of overlap than of divergence. This is true in most parts of the world, but in few places is the degree of harmony as great as in Southeast Asia. At the regional level, the two nations share fundamental goals including Indo-Pacific stability; secure shipping through the Malacca Straits; increased land, sea, and air connectivity infrastructure; and peaceful settlement of territorial disputes. At the country level, they share the goals of encouraging

[1] In this document, the term "Southeast Asia" refers both to the region as a whole and to the individual nations that compose the region, namely Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Philippines, and Singapore. There is a nearly complete overlap between these nations and the membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Timor-Leste did not exist as a nation when ASEAN was founded in 1967. Given the extremely limited nature of India's engagement with Timor-Leste, in this report terms such as "Southeast Asian nations" and "ASEAN members" are used largely interchangeably.

[2] Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament," Washington, D.C.: White House Press Office, November 17, 2011.

Myanmar's democratic transition; containing radicalism in Indonesia and Malaysia; increasing Vietnam's external engagement; and ensuring that Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines maintain their traditional relationships.

While India supports America's broad geopolitical goals for Southeast Asia, it remains strongly resistant to any strategic alignment. Trade with China is critical to India's economic growth. Openly hostile relations with Beijing could compromise Indian diplomatic efforts in Southeast Asia, where many states are reluctant to antagonize Asia's most powerful nation. There remains a strain of distrust *vis-à-vis* the United States and Nehruvian nonalignment in India's elite policymaking circles, even after the replacement of a Congress Party government by a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) one in May 2014. And many of India's broader views on global governance issues align more closely with those of China than with those of the United States.[3] None of this is to say that India is not interested in deeper cooperation with the United States—it is. But it will wish to engage with both the United States and ASEAN states at a pace and manner of India's own choosing. Due to Delhi's political and budgetary constraints, the pace and manner are likely to be less vigorous than the United States or ASEAN might wish.

For U.S. policymakers in the security arena, the challenge in building cooperation with India in Southeast Asia will boil down to four elements:

- understanding India's own goals for the region better
- adopting strategic patience in working at a pace and manner comfortable to India
- finding specific areas (technology transfer, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief [HA/DR], Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Myanmar policy) on which to focus attention
- continuing to move forward, laying the foundation for future progress.

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[3] On these issues, see George J. Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham, *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior: Growing Power and Alarm*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

India's interests in Southeast Asia are *congruent* with those of the United States, but U.S. government (USG) planners should not expect the governments to act in concert. Differing timelines, policymaking cultures, risk tolerance levels, budgetary constraints, and domestic political demands will ensure that the United States and India tread parallel paths without marching in tandem.

Key Findings

Why does India's interest in Southeast Asia matter to the United States?

India's interest will have a direct impact on U.S. strategy, both regionally and globally:

It has potential implications on the U.S. policy of "Asian rebalancing." The U.S. "Asian rebalancing" is shaped by a desire to support partner nations, maintain peace and security in the Asia-Pacific, and prevent any single power from gaining a hegemonic position in Asia. India's intentions will be a major factor in Chinese calculations, and therefore in U.S. calculations as well. As India's Look East policy is implemented, the "Asia-Pacific" region will increasingly become the "Indo-Pacific" region, with India expanding its economic and "soft power" engagement, as well as supplying niche capabilities to Southeast Asian militaries. Moreover, India is *already* a military presence in Southeast Asia, through its bases on its sovereign territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These bases are closer to Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia than they are to the Indian mainland, and India is actively expanding facilities for its navy, air force, and army.

It has potential implications for broader U.S.-Indian relations. The interests of India and the United States are often at odds outside of Southeast Asia—for example, in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Russia, and on global issues such as trade liberalization and cli-

mate change.[4] Cooperation in Southeast Asia presents a way of offsetting these points of friction, and of building up goodwill and trust to help facilitate the more difficult interactions elsewhere. This is of particular importance to the 2014 transition from a decade of rule by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to the administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi: while Modi's foreign policy will be shaped largely by external circumstances over the course of his five-year term, some indications suggest a potential for increased *divergence* of U.S.-India goals in areas including Pakistan and Afghanistan, and potential for offsetting these areas with accelerated U.S.-India cooperation in Southeast Asia.

It could lead to modest burden-sharing, and perhaps even some cost savings. While Indian burden-sharing in Southeast Asia is likely to be very limited in the near term, it could increase in the 15- to 25-year time frame. Increased cooperation in Southeast Asia could bring cost-savings lessons to the United States, albeit under fairly circumscribed conditions: Almost every military operation carried out by India is conducted at a fraction of what a similar operation would cost the U.S. military; while most methods will not be replicable by the United States, any cost-saving techniques are valuable in a budget-constrained environment.[5]

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[4] The degree of convergence between U.S. and Indian interests outside of Southeast Asia varies greatly by place, time, and circumstance: The contention of this report is that U.S. and Indian interests *often* converge elsewhere, but display *greater* convergence in Southeast Asia than most other parts of the world. For example, some analysts would see the United States and India as sharing common goals in Afghanistan and the Middle East (particularly in light of the rise of the terrorist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL); this may be true to a large degree, but if measured by the policy decisions of Washington and New Delhi, the two nations do not necessarily see eye to eye. In the case of Afghanistan, the United States has been more willing than India to seek a negotiated settlement with the Taliban and to treat Pakistan as a stakeholder rather than a spoiler; in the case of several Middle East conflicts, India has been steadfastly unwilling to deploy military force without a United Nations mandate, and views Iran as a stakeholder rather than an adversary. Few, if any, areas of Southeast Asia policy exhibit this degree of divergence between U.S. and Indian positions.

[5] Indian operations are seldom identical to U.S. operations, so this report does not argue that the Indian military can accomplish the *same* missions as the United States—merely that it can, in many circumstances, accomplish *similar* missions.

What are India's goals for Southeast Asia? How are they being implemented? Are they in concert with U.S. goals for the region, and with "Asian rebalancing" more generally?

To a very large degree, India's big-picture goals in Southeast Asia can be encapsulated in three key mission statements, all of them fully congruent with U.S. strategy:

- India seeks to maintain regional stability and prevent any outside power from dominating the region.
- India seeks to secure maritime lines of communication such as the Strait of Malacca for international trade, and increase connectivity infrastructure for land, sea, and air transportation.
- India seeks to ensure that simmering territorial disputes, including South China Sea claims, are settled peacefully.

India's bilateral relationships and country-specific goals in Southeast Asia are broadly in accord with U.S. regional policy, particularly the most important of them:

- India wants to see Myanmar continue its progress from a hermetic military dictatorship into a free and "normal" democracy.
- India wants Indonesia to maintain its democratic course, and Thailand to return to the democratic path it pursued prior to 2014, rather than revert to the military-backed rule of the past.
- India wants to see Muslim-majority Indonesia and Malaysia remain tolerant, multireligious states in which extremist views (including those currently propagated by al Qaeda, ISIL, and their widely dispersed followers) are relegated to the political fringe.
- India wants Singapore and the Philippines to maintain western-oriented policies.
- India wants Vietnam to continue its integration into the global economy, and to develop its military (including Russian military systems already serviced by India) as a local counterweight to China.
- India wants Laos and Cambodia to edge away from China's orbit.

In brief: Almost every major Indian goal for Southeast Asia is shared by the United States.

Should the United States expect India to become an ally (formal or *de facto*) to counter a potentially more aggressive China?

No. U.S. and Indian interests are congruent, but U.S. planners should not expect the governments to act in concert. Nearly half a century after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's elite political culture remains wary of established foreign entanglements. While the BJP government eschews the Nehruvian rhetoric of its Congress predecessor, its own *Hindutva* ideology often produces a similar policy inclination on the issue of nonalignment. From the standpoint of Indian policymakers across this ideological divide, an international alliance tends to force less-powerful members into supporting the leading power—and India is unwilling to play second fiddle to anyone.

Distrust of the United States runs strong among Indian policymakers.

The United States has many friends among India's policymaking establishment, but even those well-disposed toward the United States remain suspicious of American motivations. Distrust runs even deeper among non-elite political actors—including regional leaders in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu who may have a significant impact on India's policy toward Southeast Asia.

India sees China as only a *potential* threat.

Indian policymakers are acutely concerned about the intentions of their powerful neighbor—but extremely cautious about taking any actions that might turn a *potential* hazard into an *active* one. Uniformed and civilian officials alike are keenly aware that India cannot match China's military capabilities. Every act of security cooperation between the United States and India is evaluated in light of how it might be viewed by Beijing. Career government officials working in the Ministry of Defense and the Prime Minister's Office are said to be particularly cautious.

What is the primary difference between U.S. and Indian policy toward Southeast Asia?

The main difference between the two nations' regional goals lies not in *direction*, but in the *pace* at which policy is carried out and the way this policy is planned.

Indian policymaking is typically slow. A decade can be a long time in U.S. policy circles: longer than any presidential term, more than twice as long as a typical Secretary of Defense or Secretary of State will be in office. But India's parliamentary system and political culture have created a very different time frame. Important foreign policy decisions tend to take a long time to gain political and bureaucratic consensus, and an even longer time to be translated into actual policy. Budgetary constraints are an additional impediment to rapid action. The BJP administration has greater freedom of action than any Indian government in three decades, but even an absolute parliamentary majority will not remove many of the systemic impediments to speedy changes in policy direction.

Indian strategy is formed without an overarching framework. "We don't produce grand strategies," said a former high-level diplomat.[6] "A lot of key decisions are case-by-case," said a retired Indian Air Force (IAF) officer.[7] Several sources cited bureaucratic inertia as a leading driver—or nondriver—of policy. A lot of Delhi's policy regarding Southeast Asia is based upon the core premise that the relationship *should* be closer, and therefore it inevitably will grow closer. If a policy outcome is believed to be inevitable, India's leaders may feel little urgency in taking steps to make it happen.

India and Southeast Asia see the relationship differently. Just as Indian policymakers typically place more stock in shared history and culture than do their ASEAN counterparts, Indian sources tend to be more upbeat about the relationship than those from Southeast Asia. This divergence of viewpoint stems partly from differences in time frames, but in large part from focus: Southeast Asia sees India primar-

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6 Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

7 Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, New Delhi, April 10, 2013.

ily as a security partner, while India primarily sees Southeast Asia as a trade partner.

What is the most likely outlook for Indian policy toward Southeast Asia in the 2014–2030 time frame? What are the likeliest scenarios? What will be the impact of India's regional parties on Southeast Asia policy?

The general election of 2014 delivered an absolute majority of Lok Sabha seats to a single party for the first time in three decades: Prime Minister Modi will be able to govern until 2019 without coalition partners, so long as he maintains control over his own party. After 2019, however, India could well revert to the pattern of its politics since the end of one-party Congress rule a generation ago: coalition governments, often fractious and largely preoccupied merely with keeping themselves in office. Such post-2019 coalitions might be led by the BJP, by Congress, or by a Third Front; a narrow coalition would boost the influence of regional parties, several of which could have an outsized impact on India's policy toward Southeast Asia. While continuation of a BJP government not reliant on coalition partners after 2019 remains a significant possibility, it is important to note that the small differences in vote share can lead to large swings in seat count, and therefore the results of 2014 cannot be assumed to herald a long-term realignment.

Domestic constraints weigh against policy initiatives. India's policymaking—whether in the security sphere or in economic, political, or diplomatic arenas—is unlikely to become significantly swifter or more decisive despite the change in government. For India to adopt a security posture in Southeast Asia close to that desired by ASEAN policymakers, Delhi would have to make a serious commitment of funds, focus, and sustained top-level attention. The last time such an ambitious policy initiative was laid out was over two decades ago—the Look East policy laid out by Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, with the catastrophic balance-of-payment crisis of 1991 as its forcing mechanism—and that has only begun to be implemented in recent years. An additional constraint on rapid policy implementation is the cautious, bureaucratic, and often opaque decisionmaking process of the Ministry of Defense.

Key Recommendations

The United States should practice strategic patience, constantly seeking to increase its cooperation, but at a pace comfortable to India. At meetings between U.S. and Indian delegations, there is often much talk of shared values, common strategic interests, a natural partnership between (in a formulation that has long since become a cliché) "the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy." Just as Indian interlocutors can be frustrated when their shared cultural ties do not translate to a warm embrace in Southeast Asia, U.S. interlocutors should not expect relations with India to blossom overnight merely because the soil appears fertile. U.S. policymakers should be prepared for India to increase its cooperation, but at a pace more leisurely than many American observers might desire. To the limited extent that the United States can speed the process up, it can do so not merely by pressing for near-term deliverables, but by increasing the comfort level of Indian policymakers in America's long-term support for India's *own* goals. Strategic patience, however, is quite different from inaction: American officials should be willing today to put in the time, and occasionally the funds, for a benefit that might not accrue until the day after tomorrow. The previous BJP administration of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee enjoyed a close relationship with the United States, and the current BJP government may build on this legacy. In Southeast Asia, the United States might advance its long-term goals by supporting some of India's short-term goals.

The United States should prioritize cooperation with India on HA/DR in Southeast Asia. HA/DR may represent the best option for cooperation: It sits well within the comfort level of Indian policymakers, and India is very proud of its transition over the past decade from a net recipient to a net provider of international disaster assistance. Moreover, it is an area in which cooperation with India may help the United States learn lower-cost methods of accomplishing the same missions: India's entire cost for its HA/DR efforts following the 2004 Asian tsunami were probably between 1 percent and 4 percent of what

the U.S. military spent on its own efforts.[8] India may be more willing to accept U.S. training in this arena than in more kinetic aspects of military operation: HA/DR is much easier, in both political and budgetary terms, for the Ministry of Defense to approve than other types of cooperation. Moreover, the scope of HA/DR could be expanded from traditional disaster scenarios to include incidents of nonmilitary crisis requiring improved cooperation and information-sharing among the states of South and Southeast Asia: The disappearance of a Malaysian Airlines jet in March 2014 and outbreaks of infectious diseases such as avian influenza, SARS, and Ebola are a few recent examples of such incidents.

The United States should streamline the procedures for technology transfer to India. For India, the issue of whether the United States is a "reliable supplier" of military technology is inseparable from the question of whether it can be a trustworthy partner in Southeast Asia. U.S. policymakers sometimes compartmentalize these questions, but for India there can be no separation: Decisions taken on technology transfer will have a direct impact on the level of cooperation received in regional issues. Indian policymakers consider the current restrictions an expression of distrust and disrespect. Two steps that the U.S. Department of Defense could take to facilitate legitimate technology transfer are (1) speedy implementation of the initiative spearheaded by former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and current Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter to remove as many licensing restrictions affecting India as possible, and (2) whenever legally permissible, move from the presumption of denial to presumption of approval on technology transfer; i.e., generate a list of items that cannot be licensed by India, with any items not on the list presumptively permitted.[9] USG policymakers should also look for codevelopment and coproduction oppor-

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[8] These figures are based on an estimate of $10 million for India's tsunami response, and estimates for the U.S. HA/DR response ranging from $226 million to $1 billion. For sourcing and discussion of comparative costs, see the subsection titled "Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief" in Chapter Three in the main body of the report.

[9] "U.S. Working on Giving India Access to Defense Technology: Carter," *Economic Times*, September 16, 2013; Ajai Shukla, "U.S. Offers to Co-Develop New Javelin Missile with India," *Business Standard (India)*, September 17, 2013.

tunities in areas where India has already acquired capabilities, like long and medium lift.

The United States should work with India on a joint strategy for engagement with Myanmar. Of all the nations in Southeast Asia, Myanmar presents perhaps the greatest opportunity and challenge. India's interests in Southeast Asia run, literally and metaphorically, through Myanmar—and they are in close harmony with those of the United States. India is better placed than the United States to take the lead in advancing many of these goals: For reasons of geography, history, culture, and cost-effectiveness, it would make sense to have India out in front and the United States quietly in a support role. Of necessity, much of that quiet support might take the form of funding—but funding Indian-operated programs (to the extent permissible by law) would cost far less than comparable U.S.-operated ones.

The United States should be willing to help India modernize and expand its military bases on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. India's sovereign territory in Southeast Asia—the Andaman and Nicobar Islands—provides a potential area for increased U.S.-India cooperation. India's expanding security presence on these islands serves a number of U.S. interests: providing security to the Bay of Bengal, deterring piracy in the Straits of Malacca, preventing China from establishing dominance through its presence in the ports of Kyaukpyu and Chittagong, hosting biannual MILAN exercises with ASEAN partners, and forward-positioning air and naval assets that could be used for multilateral HA/DR operations throughout the region.[10] Moreover, access to Andaman and Nicobar bases could provide logistical, and perhaps operational, benefits to the U.S. Air Force (USAF) and U.S. Navy (USN) in the future. While India has at the time of writing not formally requested assistance in modernizing and expanding these bases, the United States should be willing to facilitate such requests if and when they are made, without expecting a near-term quid pro quo. Delhi remains reluctant to grant basing access to the United States, for

[10] "Milan" is the Hindi word for "meeting" or "coming together." For details on MILAN, see "India Stages MILAN 2012 Naval Exercise," *Strategic Defense Intelligence*, February 13, 2012.

fear both of Beijing's reaction and potential domestic backlash. The United States should offer as much assistance as India is willing to accept, while practicing strategic patience for a return on the investment; some returns are inherent—for example, upgrading facilities to the level necessary for use by the USAF and USN in HA/DR missions requires no explicit trade-off. Other returns are likely to be more substantial if they emerge from the natural congruence of interests rather than from rounds of hard bargaining.

Additional Recommendations

The United States and India should develop a new defense engagement structure that would be more appropriate to advance the bilateral relationship from both nations' perspectives. One possible structure might be that of the India-Russia model, in which the Defense Minister chairs the meetings and thus brings top-level support to the issues raised.[11]

USG interlocutors should focus on areas where U.S. and Indian objectives overlap, and in areas where the United States can learn from India. These areas include

- HA/DR topics such as use of C-130Js to assist victims of earthquakes, floods, and landslides; widespread health issues, such as triage and mass medical treatment; and dispersion of ships and supplies for maximum efficiency
- high-altitude warfare
- jungle warfare
- tracking lower-level infiltration aircraft.

USG interlocutors should pursue less expensive, "under the radar" engagement opportunities, such as conferences, modeling and simulation, and tabletop rather than field exercises; these will likely be more attractive to the Indian Ministry of Defense (MoD)

[11] The current arrangement is scheduled for revision in 2015.

in the near term. USG policymakers should be aware that field exercises, although typically quite valuable to both sides, might not qualify as "under the radar" activities in the near term. One exception could be to propose something like a regional Red Flag exercise specifically for HA/DR. For this to succeed, it would be important for the IAF and USAF to develop a protocol or plan for IAF/USAF cooperation in HA/DR for MoD and Prime Minister's Office approval. USAF could offer to formalize and codify the plan, including all activities, and share the lessons widely.

The USG should encourage two-way professional military education opportunities, as well as increased opportunities for Indian civilian government officials to spend time at U.S. military academies through the Expanded International Military Exchange and Training program.

Acknowledgments

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First, thanks must go to the Air Force sponsors of our study. Their support and calibration throughout the planning and execution of this project were outstanding. We would also like to thank all other Department of Defense personnel, both uniform and civilian, who provided input along the way.

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Our final word of appreciation goes to the dozens of interview sources who were so generous with their time, knowledge, and experience. These individuals include current and former government officials and military officers, as well as scholars and other policy observ-

ers; most of those interviewed are based in India and Southeast Asia, with the remainder based primarily in the United States. Most of the interviewees are cited in these pages, per RAND convention, by brief descriptives rather than names: This is for their professional—and sometimes personal—protection. This convention precludes our giving overt recognition to those whose firsthand insights form a core part of this report, but it decreases the likelihood of repaying kindness with embarrassment.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

"The United States expects others to follow its will," the prime minister of India complained, and "leaves no room for any country to sit on the fence." But "India will sit there as long as she finds it comfortable," he said. "Anyhow, nobody is going to order us about."[1]

The Indian leader was not Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but Jawaharlal Nehru, over half a century ago. A nearly identical formulation could easily have come from any of Nehru's successors, from any party, right down to the present. This sentiment will continue to describe India's foreign policy in the East Asia/Pacific region for the foreseeable future: generally supportive of America's broad geopolitical goals, but fiercely resistant to any strategic alignment and to any hint of big-power pressure. As the United States refines its own geostrategic security vision for the coming decades, it must integrate an accurate and detailed understanding of a nation that boasts the world's

[1] The first part of the quotation comes from a speech in 1956: "Nehru Urges World Powers to End Their Domination," *The News & Courier*, Charleston, S.C., July 16, 1956, p. 16. The second part was spoken in similar formulations dating back to 1949: Frank Moraes, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Bombay: Jaico, 1959, p. 476. The author cites this quote in the context of Nehru being pressed to decide whether to recognize the Communist Viet Minh government or the Western-backed Vietnam government in 1949. *Time* magazine gave a nearly identical quotation from Nehru five years later, without providing direct context other than Communist/Western divide: " 'If we find it comfortable to sit on the fence,' Prime Minister Nehru said recently, 'then we shall continue to sit on the fence. It is not the business . . . of certain other countries . . . to order us about.'" ("India: A Straight Fight," *Time*, February 22, 1954).

third-largest military, a near-triad nuclear arsenal, and one-sixth of the planet's population. This is true for every part of the U.S. government (USG), but it is particularly vital for the organizations tasked with security strategy in Asia and around the world.[2]

When it comes to American strategic planning, there may be no region where understanding India's goals should be of greater importance than Southeast Asia. The potential stakes are higher on India's western border, but the security calculations between India and Pakistan are far better understood than are those to India's east.[3] This lack of clarity about India's security goals in Southeast Asia is not limited to U.S. circles: Indian policymakers themselves are often vague about plans for engaging with this vital region. The country's "Look East" policy, a plan for increased engagement with both Southeast Asia and East Asia, was first formally articulated in 1992, but remains very much a work in progress.[4]

With its "Asian rebalancing," the United States might be in the preliminary stages of a Look East policy of its own. "Let there be no doubt," President Barack Obama said in November 2011, "in the Asia-Pacific in the 21st century, the United States of America is all in." The

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[2] Of most direct relevance to this report, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), the U.S. Air Force (USAF), U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), and Pacific Air Forces (PACAF). For discussions of DoD strategy for the Asia-Pacific, see U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, Washington, D.C., January 2012; David F. Helvey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia, "The Rebalance to Asia II: Security and Defense—Cooperation and Challenges," statement before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Washington, D.C., April 25, 2013.

[3] For the USAF, U.S. Navy (USN), PACOM, and PACAF, India's role in Southeast Asia may be of even greater interest than India's rivalry with Pakistan or Indian involvement in Afghanistan; for the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), the Pakistan-Afghanistan theater will loom larger for at least the next decade, and possibly longer. PACOM, for example, views India as "a particularly important partner in shaping the security environment, and we will continue to deepen our cooperation to address challenges to the Asia-Pacific." See PACOM, "USPACOM Strategy," undated.

[4] The Look East policy's initiation can be pegged to various dates, but the most commonly understood one is 1992. See Anna Louise Strachan, Harnit Kaur Kang, and Tuli Shinha, "India's Look East Policy: A Critical Assessment—Interview with Ambassador Rajiv Sikri," New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, October 2009.

parameters of this Asian rebalancing, like that of India, are still being shaped: This guiding principle has not yet been translated into operational planning for DoD in general or the USAF in particular.[5] But as President Obama explicitly noted, "We see America's enhanced presence across Southeast Asia . . . in our welcome of India as it 'looks east' and plays a larger role as an Asian power."[6]

The world's two largest democracies have core security interests that, while not in complete alignment, show far more significant points of overlap than of divergence. The U.S. Trade Representative will often have disagreements with India's Commerce Minister, but there will be a much greater convergence on issues of security and defense. In Asia in general, and Southeast Asia in particular, both India and the United States seek

- a stable, predictable, and rules-bound political system, in which international conflicts are settled through diplomatic channels rather than the threat or use of military force
- freedom of navigation in all crucial maritime transit points, including (but not limited to) the Strait of Malacca
- prevention of China from turning its position of regional influence into one of regional domination
- prevention of common threats to the international community, including terrorism, maritime piracy, and nuclear proliferation
- resolution of territorial disputes—particularly the competing South China Sea claims of China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Taiwan, and Malaysia—by peaceful methods rather than intimidation or military action.

This report is founded on the proposition that India's security goals in Southeast Asia are largely congruent with those of the United

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[5] For the DoD's rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific, see Ashton B. Carter, Deputy Secretary of Defense, "The U.S. Defense Rebalance to Asia," speech delivered at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2013.

[6] Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament," Washington, D.C.: White House Press Office, November 17, 2011.

States. If this proposition is correct, it leads to a policy problem of how best to translate this congruence of goals into concrete action.

The Policy Problem

If the United States and India had perfect alignment of goals and time frames in Southeast Asia policy, there would be no policy problem to explore. The goals, however, are *merely congruent* rather than *perfectly aligned*, and there is significant divergence over the time frame and degree of cooperation favored by the United States and India. The shapers of U.S. security strategy in Asia, therefore, face a policy problem: how to better understand India's goals in Southeast Asia, and how to factor such understanding into U.S. security plans.

Purpose of This Document

This report argues that the United States and India can and should seek greater cooperation in Southeast Asia—both for the sake of the two nations' common goals in this critical region, and for the sake of wider policy goals noted above. Cooperation, by definition, is a two-way street: Both parties must understand each other's core goals, firm limitations, and the subtle signals that describe them. This report aims to address the American side of the knowledge equation—that is, to help U.S. policy-shapers understand India's goals in Southeast Asia, as well as the factors that will limit both the pace and depth of increased Indian engagement in the region.

Organization

In brief, this report argues that

- the goals of the United States and India are largely congruent in Southeast Asia

- U.S. planners should have relatively modest expectations for near-term bilateral cooperation or burden-sharing with India
- long-term strategic benefits justify a policy of patient engagement at India's preferred pace, grounded in a detailed understanding of India's own interests and style of international interaction.

Chapter Two addresses the foundational question of why U.S. planners should care about India's interest in Southeast Asia. It suggests that the four most important reasons for U.S. attention are: the impact of India-Southeast Asia engagement on U.S. diplomatic and security plans for an "Asian rebalancing;" the impact of this engagement on U.S. strategy in regard to China; the impact on overall U.S.-India relations; and the potential for helping the USG, particularly the USAF, carry out its Asia missions in a more cost-effective manner. Chapter Three examines India's policy toward Southeast Asia as articulated by its civilian and military leadership, and as placed in historical context. Chapter Four outlines India's bilateral relationship with each of the key nations in Southeast Asia. Chapter Five looks in detail at the India-China rivalry, as it is expressed in Southeast Asia. Chapter Six explores the internal factors that will shape the policy choices of the Indian government that took office in May 2014, and lays out the most likely set of scenarios for Indian policy toward Southeast Asia in the 2014–2030 time frame. Chapter Seven presents key findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

Why Does India's Interest in Southeast Asia Matter to the United States?

There are many reasons for the shapers and implementers of U.S. security policy to care about India's interest in Southeast Asia, and the overarching rationale can be summarized briefly: India's goals are largely congruent with American objectives for the region, but turning this convergence into productive cooperation will require patient engagement, modest expectations, and a nuanced understanding of New Delhi's priorities. This chapter seeks to establish the rationale underlying this report: India's interest in Southeast Asia (see Figure 2.1) is of sufficient long-term importance to core U.S. strategic objectives to justify increased near-term attention and engagement.

Southeast Asia is a region of critical and growing importance to the U.S. military.[1] Economically, the region is arguably the most dynamic in the world, with growth that has far exceeded the global average for the last two decades, a trend that remains strong today. Some of America's most important trading partners, as well as important military allies, lie within the region. Its waters comprise critical sea lanes for U.S. commerce and energy supplies. There are also risks if particular countries in the region fail to thrive. Thailand and the Philippines are home to active insurgencies that could create safe havens for international terrorists; Indonesia's unevenly controlled archipelago has spawned at least one highly capable al Qaeda–linked terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiyah, and could prove fertile ground for similar groups in the future.

[1] Eric Heginbotham, Angel Rabasa, and Scott Harold, *Frontline Southeast Asia: U.S.-China Competition for Political-Military Influence*, unpublished RAND research, March 2013.

Figure 2.1
Map of India and Southeast Asia

RAND *RR1021-2.1*

The region is also important to other security interests that stretch beyond Southeast Asia itself. In addition to being a commercial hub, Southeast Asian states—and U.S. access in them—play an important role in supporting U.S. operations in Southwest Asia and the Middle East. Access to locations in Southeast Asia could also play a major role in deterrence *vis-à-vis* China—and in operations, should deterrence fail. The value of these locations will grow, as Chinese conventionally armed ballistic and cruise missile ranges grow and as People's Liberation Army (PLA) power projection capabilities improve. More operating locations in Southeast Asia could allow U.S. forces to disperse at the outset of a conflict, and, depending on the specific locations, deploy outside the range of most Chinese missiles. Both of these would improve U.S. operational resiliency and buttress deterrence by denying China confidence in its ability to inflict crippling losses early in a conflict.

A series of announcements in late 2011 and 2012 affirmed a U.S. "rebalance" toward Asia, providing an additional rationale for attention to Southeast Asia. Yet this must be viewed as the beginning of a diplomatic and military political effort that will take years to achieve

anything resembling broad access across a range of Southeast Asian states. In this context, India's strategic interest in Southeast Asia warrants increased U.S. attention.

Congruence of Indian and U.S. Goals in Southeast Asia

The central U.S. security objectives in Southeast Asia include

- a stable, predictable, and rules-bound political system, in which international conflicts are settled through diplomatic channels rather than the threat or use of military force
- freedom of navigation in all vital maritime transit points, including the Strait of Malacca
- prevention of China from turning its position of regional influence into one of regional domination
- prevention of common threats to the international community, including terrorism, maritime piracy, and nuclear proliferation
- resolution of territorial disputes—particularly the competing South China Sea claims of China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Taiwan, and Malaysia—by peaceful methods rather than intimidation or military action.

Every one of these objectives is shared by India. Every one of these objectives is also shared by all of the nations of Southeast Asia, and at least three of the five are shared by China as well.[2] The central Indian objectives in the region are discussed in Chapter Three, and there is no core Indian goal that is at odds with the U.S. objectives described. As one retired Indian flag officer said in an interview, "Keeping the region

[2] China would have a different view of the third and fifth objectives in the list above, and there are limited circumstances in which some Southeast Asian nations might also take issue with the objective of resolution of disputes solely by diplomatic means (for example, Thailand's border standoff with Cambodia in January 2011).

safe, secure, and tranquil isn't just an American priority—our interests are in brilliant alignment."[3]

This sentiment was virtually universal among sources interviewed for this project:[4] Military or civilian, active or retired, from every political party, Indian, American or of another nationality—almost all interviewees saw a deep congruence of interests in Southeast Asia between the two nations. "We have parallel interests, and complementary capabilities," said one retired diplomat involved in Track Two dialogue.[5]

There are two noteworthy caveats:

1. Shared regional goals do not eliminate India's aversion to broader political alignment. While the Non-Aligned Movement is a Cold War relic, Indian leaders of all stripes retain an objection to anything suggestive of a formal alliance. This leads to rhetorical caution, and great hesitancy about overt coordination with the United States. "Our goals are in accord," said one policymaker, "so there is no need to trumpet it."[6] A former Indian diplomat urged that the two nations conduct their policies "in parallel, not in conjunction." He made clear that this was a matter of national pride and political necessity, not an expression of divergent objectives: "Toeing the line is out of the question—that will never happen. But our interests are fundamentally in accord. That will never change."[7]

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[3] Interview with retired Indian Air Force (IAF) flag officer, New Delhi, April 8, 2013. Another source put it, "The objectives of the U.S. and India in Southeast Asia are the same: to balance China and preserve our common interests." Interview with former strategic advisor to an Indian prime minister, New Delhi, January 15, 2013.

[4] Only two sources saw a divergence of interest, both for the same reason: They did not believe that U.S. goals were limited to those publicly articulated. Instead, these sources (both of them retired Indian diplomats) saw the United States as potentially aligning itself with China against India's engagement in Southeast Asia. One of the sources additionally saw the U.S. goals in Southeast Asia in far more expansive terms than any American source did: establishment of a *de facto* imperial sphere of influence, to the exclusion of all other outside powers (including India). Interview with former strategic advisor to an Indian prime minister, 2013; interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

[5] Interview with participant in India-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Track II dialogue, New Delhi, January 15, 2013.

[6] Identifying description and date of interview withheld at request of interviewee.

[7] Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013.

2. Indian and U.S. interests diverge on nondefense global issues that affect Southeast Asia. While the two countries' security goals for Southeast Asia are in accord, there are a variety of nondefense functional issues on which India and the United States do not necessarily see eye to eye. Two such issues with particular relevance to Southeast Asia are:[8]

a. Trade: India and the United States have clashed on a variety of global trade issues, most notably tariffs and intellectual property. In Southeast Asia, the United States is negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement with four ASEAN members (Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei), as well as other Pacific Rim nations (Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and Peru).[9] From an Indian perspective, both the TPP and U.S. attempts to prevent Indian pharmaceutical manufacturers from selling generic versions of U.S.-patented drugs in Southeast Asia represent clear divergences of objectives.[10] Prime Minister Modi ran a notably business-friendly administration as chief minister of Gujarat, and it is possible that his administration will have less friction with the United States over trade issues than his predecessors had, but this remains an untested proposition.

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[8] Indian interests diverge with the United States on other issues internationally and in other regions. For example, India, like China, has upheld the World Trade Organization Doha negotiations and upholds the Westphalia notions of national sovereignty and supports a more multipolar international system. Despite the particular issues, there is a significant Indian diaspora in the United States with fewer Indians in China. See Vinod Khanna, "India's Soft Balancing with China and the U.S. in the Twenty-First Century," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 3, July-September 2011, p. 295.

[9] The TPP could be considered a part of U.S. economic security goals, but would lie outside the bounds of its defense or "hard power" security considerations. Pacific Rim nations currently participating in TPP discussions are: the United States, Vietnam, Singapore, Peru, New Zealand, Mexico, Malaysia, Japan, Chile, Canada, Brunei, and Australia; South Korea is reported to be considering joining the negotiations. "TPP Trade Deal Expected in Early 2014," Reuters, December 11, 2013; "Korea to Join Trans-Pacific Partnership," chosun.com, September 9, 2013.

[10] Sean West and Jesse Kaplan, "Bring India into the TPP," *Politico*, August 1, 2013; Doug Palmer, "U.S. Struggles with Pharmaceutical Goals in Asia Trade Talks," Reuters, March 28, 2013; Doctors Without Borders, "Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement Could Block Patient Access to Affordable Generic Medicines," July 15, 2013.

b. Climate change:[11] Despite important statements of shared intent by the leaders of the world's three largest producers of carbon dioxide,[12] the positions of the United States, China, and India remain far from harmonized. A joint statement by President Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping in November 2014 moved these two nations closer to a shared approach, but the degree to which rhetoric will be translated into action remains to be seen; Obama's visit to New Delhi two months later did not result in a parallel commitment from India.[13]

Indeed, India's position on climate change is in far closer accord with that of China than that of the United States: It favors national targets for emission control that are based on population rather than current levels. Such a standard favors large, newly industrializing nations over already-industrialized states such as the United States,

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[11] PACOM commander Admiral Samuel J. Locklear has identified climate change as a serious security concern: Bryan Bender, "Chief of U.S. Pacific Forces Calls Climate Biggest Worry," *Boston Globe*, March 9, 2013. In most U.S. and Indian government discussions, however, climate change is addressed by officials in other agencies, and rarely put on the agenda of DoD/Ministry of Defense (MoD) or uniform-to-uniform talks.

[12] According to the World Bank's metric (which includes only the burning of fossil fuel and production of concrete, while excluding the release of greenhouse gases through deforestation and other methods), in 2010, China produced 8.3 million kilotons of carbon dioxide, the United States produced 5.4 million kilotons, and India produced 2.0 million kilotons; the next-highest nations were Russia (1.7 million kilotons) and Japan (1.2 million kilotons). While the European Union as a whole produced more than India, no single European nation produced more than 750 million kilotons. World Bank, *Data: CO2 Emissions (kilotons).*

[13] In a joint statement issued by President Obama and President Xi on November 11, 2014, "The United States intends to achieve an economy-wide target of reducing its emissions by 26 to 28 percent below its 2005 level in 2025 and to make best efforts to reduce its emissions by 28 percent. China intends to achieve the peaking of CO_2 emissions around 2030 and to make best efforts to peak early and intends to increase the share of non–fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 20 percent by 2030" (Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, *U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change*, Beijing: November 11, 2014). By contrast, the Obama-Modi meeting on January 26, 2015, resulted in no commitment by India to meet any specific goal in reduction of CO_2; while Modi described the effort to combat climate change as "an article of faith" for him, he merely expressed support for a global climate change agreement expected to be negotiated in Paris later the same year, and made the very limited pledge to move India toward compliance with the Montreal Protocol regarding another greenhouse gas (hydrofluorocarbons). Peter Baker and Ellen Barry, "Obama Clears Hurdle to Better Ties with India," *New York Times*, January 25, 2015.

European countries, and Japan. As the world's two most populous nations, rapidly industrializing China and India rank far lower on a per capita than a total output basis: By this metric, at least 55 nations outrank China, and more than 100 emit more CO_2 than India.[14] A per capita rather than current-level standard would be attractive to pivotal Southeast Asian nations: Indonesia (237 million population, and the world's fifth-largest current emitter if total includes CO_2 released by rainforest depletion) is the most directly affected, but other ASEAN states would be favored by the India-China formula (high-population states like the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand, as well as rainforest-depleting Malaysia). The only Southeast Asian nation with a clear interest to support the U.S. standard rather than that favored by India and China would be tiny, hydrocarbon-rich Brunei.[15]

Neither of these caveats weakens the foundational premise of close alignment between U.S. and Indian *security* interests in Southeast Asia. There are some *nondefense* issues affecting Southeast Asia where interests diverge, and there are some security or defense issues *outside Southeast Asia* where India and the United States have different goals, but on security issues in the region there is very close alignment. The main divergence is not over objectives, but over time frame: India seeks the same ends, but—due to a combination of factors described in Chapter Six—is willing to defer action on them for a decade or more.

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[14] In 2010, India emitted 1.7 metric tons of CO_2 per capita, while China emitted 6.2 metric tons. By contrast, the United States emitted 17.6 metric tons, and eco-friendly Nordic countries such as Finland and Norway emitted 11.5 and 11.7 metric tons, respectively. World Bank, *Data: CO_2 Emissions (Metric tons per capita).*

[15] Tofiq Siddiqi, "Sino-India Relations: China and India: More Cooperation Than Competition in Energy and Climate Change," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, Spring/Summer 2011, pp. 73–90; "China, India, and Climate Change: Take the Lead," *Economist*, February 2, 2013. On a per capita basis, Indonesia and Vietnam emit almost exactly the same amount of CO_2 as India does (1.8 million metric tons for Indonesia, 1.7 million for Vietnam). Thailand (4.4 million), Malaysia (7.7 million), and Singapore (2.7 million) emit more, but well below the level of most of the industrialized West. The Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos combined add up to the same per capita total as India alone (1.7 million). Brunei, with 22.9 million tons per capita, is the only clear outlier. World Bank, *Data: CO_2 Emissions (Metric tons per capita).*

Implications for U.S. Strategy of "Asian Rebalancing"

India could, if it so chose, greatly complicate China's ambitions to assert economic, military, and "soft power" predominance in East Asia. If India chose to devote significant economic, military, and diplomatic resources to the region, it could present what China would consider to be a genuine threat to its southern flank. The India-China relationship will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, but for the purpose of answering the question, "Why does India's interest in Southeast Asia matter to the United States?" one need only recognize three basic points.

First, the U.S. "Asian rebalancing" is fundamentally shaped by a desire to support partner nations and maintain the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region—particularly in light of China's growing presence and uncertainties about China's future intentions.[16]

Second, India—a traditional rival of China in the economic, security, and cultural spheres—will be a major factor in U.S. calculations. A better understanding of Indian interests is therefore essential to the rebalance. As India's Look East policy is implemented, the "Asia-Pacific" region will increasingly become the "Indo-Pacific" region.[17]

Third, India is *already* a military presence in Southeast Asia, through its bases on its sovereign territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These bases are closer to Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia than they are to the Indian mainland, and India is actively expanding their facilities for its navy, air force, and army.[18] As India's then-ambassador to the United States noted in 2013, "We share land and maritime borders with Myanmar, Indonesia, and Thailand. The southernmost tip of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal is just 90 nautical miles from Indonesia and the

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[16] This point is discussed in greater depth in Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 2.

[17] For more discussion of the Indo-Pacific shift, see C. Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 2012c; and Rory Medcalf, "The Indo-Pacific: What's in a Name?" *The American Interest*, October 10, 2013.

[18] Dhiraj Kukreja, "Andaman and Nicobar Islands: A Security Challenge for India," *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, January-March 2013.

northernmost tip less than ten nautical miles from Myanmar."[19] With increased U.S.-Indian engagement on Southeast Asia issues, these Andaman and Nicobar bases could be a site for bilateral or multilateral humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) cooperation. If Beijing's foreign policy became more aggressive in the future, India's Andaman and Nicobar bases could complicate Chinese power projection anywhere in the Indian Ocean region.

As the United States seeks to better define its own "Asian rebalancing," the role of India will have to shape the options—if only because that role will inevitably shape the options and actions not only of China, but of all other Asian players. Two of the most potentially valuable areas for increased cooperation between the United States and India in Southeast Asia are in Myanmar, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These two sites represent the low-hanging fruit, and should be the focus of increased attention by U.S. policymakers.

Implications for Overall U.S.-India Relationship

Increased U.S.-India engagement on Southeast Asia can be viewed through the prism of not merely *challenge* but of *opportunity*. The outlook for U.S.-India cooperation is better in Southeast Asia than in most other parts of the world. Outside of Southeast Asia, the interests of India and the United States often diverge in regard to Pakistan,[20]

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[19] Nirupama Rao, "America's 'Asian Pivot': The View from India," Spring 2013 Brown-India Initiative Seminar Series, Brown University, Providence, R.I., February 4, 2013, p. 3.

[20] A former Indian diplomat, and current participant in India-ASEAN Track II talks, noted that there is a wide trust gap between the United States and India regarding Pakistan, but that in Southeast Asia the national interests were nearly aligned. (Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013.) For a deeper discussion of the historical divergence of U.S.-India interests over Pakistan, see Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, pp. 80–83, 134–146. Prime Minister Modi devoted little time to outlining his foreign policy agenda before taking office, but Pakistan is one area in which he may take a sharply different approach from that of his immediate predecessor, Manmohan Singh: Despite the conciliatory mood following his decision to invite the Pakistani Prime Minister to his inauguration, Modi's harsh rhetoric during the Mumbai attack of 2008 and other moments of tension suggest the

Afghanistan,[21] the Middle East (especially Iran), Russia, and economic issues, including trade liberalization and patent protection.

Southeast Asia presents a way of offsetting these points of friction, and of building up goodwill and trust to help facilitate the more difficult interactions elsewhere. By engaging, even slowly, with India over Southeast Asia, the United States can facilitate easier interactions with India on more difficult issues. Indeed, a slow approach may well be the most effective course: The United States should practice *strategic patience* toward India.

Increased cooperation in Southeast Asia could also help offset some of the structural impediments to frictionless U.S.-India security engagement. The U.S.-India New Framework for Defense Cooperation created a three-level structure in 2005 for managing military cooperation. In the framework, service-led Executive Steering Groups (ESGs) report to a joint-led Military Cooperation Group (MCG), which in turn reports to a civilian-led Defense Policy Group (DPG). The ESGs are nominally headed by three-star general flag officers, though in practice, PACAF usually sends a two-star general flag officer to lead the discussions due to demands on PACAF leadership time. The three-star ESG forum then reports to a two star–led MCG, cochaired by PACOM on the U.S. side and the Integrated Defense Staff on the Indian side. While PACOM has the authority and experience managing international engagement, the Indian Integrated Defense Staff has neither, and so the MCG ends up as a rubber-stamping entity for service-led ESGs. Moreover, the MoD frequently overrules decisions made by the ESGs, so they serve more as a brainstorming entity than a planning forum. This structure is set to expire in 2015, and the expira-

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possibility for a more aggressive approach during crises, which could be at variance with U.S. goals for stability and predictability in the region.

[21] On May 27, 2014, President Obama announced that U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan would drop to 9,800 by the end of that year, to 5,400 by the end of 2015, and down to a residual force located at the U.S. embassy in Kabul by the end of his presidential term. For discussion of potential post-2014 U.S. "small footprint" strategy toward Afghanistan, in contrast with India's preference for a larger U.S. military and political commitment, see Jonah Blank, "Invading Afghanistan, Then and Now: What Washington Should Learn from Wars Past," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 5, September/October 2011, pp. 156–162.

tion will provide an opportunity for DoD and its Indian counterpart to consider alternative frameworks.[22]

Ties between the USAF and the IAF are in particular need of closer attention. The USN and the Indian Navy operate together far more readily, but U.S. and Indian air forces have less-developed interaction than perhaps any branch of the services.[23] Better cooperation could lead to more aviation sales (following on the 2010–2013 sales of C-130Js and C-17s),[24] as the USAF comes to better understand the needs and requirements of the IAF. A retired IAF flag officer noted the following future needs that might be filled by U.S. suppliers:[25]

- **increased heavy-lift:** India may double its C-17 fleet from ten to 20 in the next three to five years.
- **refueling platforms:** India uses Russian frames, but might switch to a Western platform in the future; he cited the Airbus A330 MRTT as a possible option.

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[22] One possible framework would take the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation as a model: In this framework, the Defense Minister chairs the meetings and is thus invested in quickly solving problems by liaising directly with the other civilian MoD leaders. Such top-level political buy-in on the Indian side might clarify which exercises, exchanges, and other events stand the greatest likelihood of approval, and which are best left unproposed. For India-Russia structure, see Government of India, Embassy of India to Russia, "India-Russia Defence Cooperation," undated. For more discussion of the ESG/MCG process, see Christopher Clary, Paula G. Thornhill, and Sarah Harting, *Summary of U.S.-India Dialogue on Airpower Issues*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, unpublished manuscript.

[23] For a survey of U.S.-India military engagement across services, see S. Amer Latif, *U.S.-India Military Engagement: Steady as They Go*, report of the CSIS Wadhwani Chair in U.S.-India Policy Studies, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 2012. For recent developments in the U.S. and Indian naval partnership, see Thomas A. Bowditch, *A U.S. Navy-Indian Navy Partnership for the Future*, Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, November 2010; Nilanthi Samaranayake, Satu Limaye, Dmitry Gorenburg, Catherine Lea, and Thomas A. Bowditch, *U.S.-India Security Burden Sharing? The Potential for Coordinated Capacity-Building in the Indian Ocean*, Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, April 2013.

[24] More such sales may already be in the pipeline: See Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India to Buy 6 More C-130Js," *Defense News*, September 13, 2013.

[25] He summed up IAF needs as: "We need better eyes, and longer legs." Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

- **surveillance:** India is developing its own Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), and has a robust space program, but may be interested in the purchase or codevelopment of U.S. platforms to fill its need for greater situational awareness. Perhaps the liveliest area of future discussions in this area, he and other officers noted, will involve unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).
- **base modernization:** The Bay of Bengal coastline was cited as an area where the IAF might have a particular desire for an array of technologies and hardware.

Like virtually all Indian sources interviewed, this IAF officer emphasized the need for streamlined technology transfer procedures. "We have at least a 15–20 year window of vulnerability in which to modernize our weapons and networks," he emphasized. "Will the U.S. be there for us?"[26] From the perspective of India's security policymakers, this is the true test of America's commitment to the bilateral relationship. "[Former Defense] Secretary [Leon] Panetta promised a thorough review," a retired diplomat noted. "Current strictures are an insult. We cannot have preconditions on cooperation."[27] The issue of technology transfers will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven, but U.S. policymakers should always be aware of the weight this issue carries in New Delhi.

In the medium term, the USAF might gain access to IAF facilities for refitting and refueling; in the long term, perhaps even basing. The USAF could gain more interoperability, a goal currently looked upon with a surprising level of distrust by Indian policymakers.[28] All of this

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[26] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

[27] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[28] One retired Indian flag officer expressed the view that interoperability was of no real interest. India conducts joint exercises with nations using a wide variety of platforms, he noted, so there was no need for increased familiarity with American hardware or procedures. (Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.) A retired Indian diplomat expressed concern that a push for increased HA/DR cooperation might be a disguised attempt to increase interoperability—and was taken aback that U.S. interlocutors viewed interoperability as a goal sufficiently benign as to require no disguise. Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

relies on building trust and confidence, which can be fostered by cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Implications for U.S. Burden-Sharing and Cost Savings

In an environment of constrained defense budgets, a compelling question underlying the importance of the study has been: As India engages in Southeast Asia, will the United States be able to accomplish its own security/defense missions more economically? This report's answer is: In the short-term, probably not. In the longer term, maybe—but due to lessons learned more than to burden-sharing.

This report sees India as unlikely to engage in significant burden-sharing in Southeast Asia, at least for the next ten years. But that is only part of the equation: India has lessons to teach the United States on how to conduct operations in a more cost-effective manner. Almost every military operation carried out by Indian forces is conducted at far less cost than the same operation performed by the U.S. military.[29] India's active duty military is only slightly smaller than that of the United States, and when reserve and paramilitary components are included it is more than twice as large.[30] For 2013–2014, India's defense budget is $37.4 billion in U.S. dollars (USD). Even after draconian cuts due to sequestration, the United States will spend approximately 14 times as much money, $526 billion, on its military as India

[29] It is important to emphasize the word "same" in here: An apples-to-apples cost comparison would have to exclude cases in which the U.S. employs lower-cost technology to conduct a similar operation in fulfillment of a parallel mission—for example, by deploying a UAV instead of a manned aircraft.

[30] India's active duty and reserve forces combined are slightly *larger* than those of the United States: 2,480,000 for India, compared with 2,335,000 for the United States. Because the United States has no direct counterpart to India's 1,404,000 active and 988,000 reserve paramilitary units—including such battle-tested units as the Rashtriya Rifles and the Assam Rifles—the total number of Indian troops (i.e., active, reserve, and paramilitary) is more than twice as large as the U.S. total. Indian force levels: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2014*, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 241; U.S. force levels: IISS, 2014, p. 42.

will spend on its own force.[31] It is reasonable to assume that there are some lessons to be learned.

Most of India's savings are brought about in ways the United States would not, and should not, emulate: Skimping on aircraft maintenance and flight training, for example, would compromise safety.[32] But other practices and procedures may well be transferrable—and only a process of patient, steady engagement will enable the United States to learn which ones are useful. In an era when defense budgets are likely to experience severe pressure for many years, every opportunity to learn more cost-effective methods should be eagerly sought out.

Some areas in which the USAF might be able learn more cost-effective methods through engagement with IAF counterparts include specialization and countering small, unmarked aircraft used for terrorist or special operations forces (SOF) infiltration. One area in which USAF interlocutors might be able to learn from their Indian counterparts would be SOF assault/night landing in mountainous terrain or heavy jungles: This is a niche specialization in which the IAF has considerable expertise due to its operation in Himalayan areas, including Kashmir and parts of the insurgency-wracked Northeast. In addition to insurgencies in Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura, the IAF has experience in monitoring the skies above the Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh, parts of which China claims as its own territory.[33]

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[31] India's defense budget: Laxman K. Behera, "India's Defense Budget 2013–14: A Bumpy Road Ahead," Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) Comment, New Delhi: Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, March 4, 2013.

[32] Kabir Taneja, "The Trouble with India's MIG-21 Fighter Jets," *New York Times*, August 8, 2013; Sunil Dasgupta and Stephen P. Cohen, "How Not to Deal with Defence Corruption," *Indian Express*, April 2, 2013.

[33] Some analysts cited areas open to more considerable debate, including rapid acquisition capability, cyber, flight test integration, and—most controversially—weapons development. This last area was most contentious, with many observers describing India's defense development sector as inefficient and corrupt: see Richard Bitzinger, "Indian Defense Procurement Policies and the Failure of Autarky," International Relations and Security Network, December 18, 2012; Richard Bitzinger, "India's Once and Future Defense Industry," RSIS Commentaries, October 8, 2007; and Richard Bitzinger, "China's Defense Technology and Manufacturing Base in a Regional Context: Arms Manufacturing in Asia," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2011, pp. 425–450. See also Dasgupta and Cohen, 2013. For

One example of the potential for cost-savings lessons can be found in India's September 2014 mission to Mars—the first successful endeavor by any Asian nation. The *Mangalyaan* mission (from the Sanskrit words for "Mars" and "craft," also called the Mars Orbiter Mission, or "MOM") cost just $74 million: as Prime Minister Modi correctly noted, this was less than the budget for the Hollywood space-movie *Gravity*.[34] By contrast, NASA's 2013–2014 Maven Mars mission, the latest in a series that included at least three failures, cost nine times as much: $671 million. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) kept its costs down not by forgoing any mission-critical components—the critical part of the mission was simply to reach Mars, a feat that had eluded better-funded efforts launched by much wealthier nations. Instead, ISRO stripped away all equipment and capabilities deemed inessential, limiting the payload to about 15 kilograms—less than one-quarter of the 65-kilogram payload carried by Maven. The reduced load, however, was sufficient to address at least one question of keen interest to other Mars missions: measuring the levels of methane in the Martian atmosphere. In this instance, at least, India's model for cost-savings—using inexpensive technology wherever possible, and descoping the mission to its barest essentials—may well be transferrable to certain U.S. military missions.

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discussion of India's efforts to counter Pakistan-backed infiltration in Kashmir, see Jonah Blank, "Kashmir: Fundamentalism Takes Root," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 6, November/December 1999.

[34] The budget for *Gravity* was about $105 million. (Joanna Sugden, "NASA's Maven Craft Beats India's *Mangalyaan* in Space Race to Mars," *Wall Street Journal Online*, September 22, 2014.) For a description of *Mangalyaan*'s scientific value and the utility of ISRO's low-budget approach, see Jonathan Amos, "Why India's Mars Mission Is So Cheap—And Thrilling," BBC.com, September 24, 2014.

CHAPTER THREE

What Is India's Strategy Toward Southeast Asia?

Background to India's Strategy: Ancient Culture, Non-Invasive Politics

Historical and Cultural Background: For India, the Foundation of Engagement

Like the Mars mission—an effort combining 21st-century technology with ancient Sanskrit terminology and religiously laden Hindu imagery—India's policy toward its eastern neighbors has one foot in the past and one in the future. From an Indian perspective, engagement with Southeast Asia is not an innovation, or even a policy shift: It is the latest chapter in a story stretching back well over two millennia.[1] Of the ten ASEAN nations, all but Thailand exist in their modern form as states crafted by Western colonial powers; it was the British, French, Dutch, and Spanish who brought what James Clad terms "the perfectly surveyed state" to Southeast Asia.[2] Prior to the 19th century, every nation in Southeast Asia had seen the rise and fall of kingdoms largely uncorrelated with modern boundaries. It is these precolonial polities that Indian strategists often regard as the most organic expression of

[1] For discussion of historical Indian-Southeast Asian relations, see Kwa Chong-Guan, ed., *Early Southeast Asia Viewed from India: An Anthology of Articles from the Journal of the Greater India Society*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2013; Amitav Acharya, *Civilizations in Embrace: The Spread of Ideas and the Transformation of Power, India and Southeast Asia in the Classical Age*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013.

[2] James Clad, "Delineation and Borders in Southeast Asia," in James Clad, ed., *The Borderlands of Southeast Asia: Geopolitics, Terrorism, and Globalization*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2011b, p. 4.

Southeast Asia: What matters most is the culture and timeless values of peoples such as the Malays, for example, not the arbitrary divvying up of these peoples into the modern citizenry of Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei. From this perspective, the relationship between India and the Indic-influenced peoples of Southeast Asia is not even really a *choice*—it is the inevitable, and perennial, blossoming of seeds planted long ago.

The most fertile such seed, in the view of many Indian policymakers, is the Buddhist religion. According to at least one calculation, the three countries with the world's most overwhelmingly Buddhist populations are all in Southeast Asia, and mainland Southeast Asia's other two states are in the global top eight.[3] The Buddha was born in what is now Nepal—to Indian thinkers, part of India's sacred geography—and he lived, preached, formulated his doctrines, and eventually entered Nirvana in what is now India.[4]

In all mainland Southeast Asian states except Vietnam, the dominant form of Buddhism practiced is Theravada rather than Mahayana. This is significant because Theravada practice retains more direct cultural and ideological influences from India than does the more recently developed Mahayana school: While Buddhism in the Mahayanist world carries the cultural imprint of China more directly than that of India, the faith as practiced in Theravada countries developed without significant Chinese influence.[5] The canonical texts of both schools were

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[3] Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar are the top three, at 95, 90, and 88 percent, respectively; Laos and Vietnam, due to their governments' Communist ideology, have fewer overt practitioners of any faith. See Buddha Dharma Education Association & Buddhanet, "Largest Buddhist Populations," undated.

[4] The exact birth site of Siddhartha Gautama is given variously as the town of Lumpini or the Shakya capital city of Kapilavastu. (A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000, p. 45.) Both sites are relatively close to the modern boundary between India and Nepal, and the Shakya state was a part of lowland Indic culture rather than one of the Tibeto-Mongolian cultures of Nepal's higher altitudes. For discussion of Buddhism in India, and its spread throughout Southeast Asia, see Jonah Blank, *Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God: Retracing the Ramayana Through India*, New York: Grove, 2000, pp. 105–109.

[5] This distinction is important in assessing the relative weight to give to the "soft power" of India and China in the religious sphere: The Buddhism of the four Theravada countries

composed in the sacred languages of ancient India: Pali for the Theravada canon, Pali and Sanskrit for the Mahayana scriptures. Adherents of both the Theravada and Mahayana schools regard India as the wellspring of their faith. The town of Bodh Gaya in the northern Indian state of Bihar, the spot on which the Buddha attained enlightenment, is the most important pilgrimage site in the Buddhist world.

A related cultural seed implanted even earlier than Buddhism is that of Hindu ideas, myths, and worldviews. According to scriptures believed to date to the 9th century, crossing the *kala pani*—"black waters," or the great oceans surrounding India on three sides—was a taboo so strict that it caused the traveler to lose his caste.[6] Yet Hinduism spread throughout Southeast Asia, and Hindu empires such as those centered in Angkor and the Javanese complex of Prambanan rank among world's great civilizations. Today, the only sizable indigenous Hindu community in Southeast Asia is found in the Indonesian province of Bali: about 4 million Hindus out of a national population of 242 million, concentrated on one out of the country's 13,700 islands.[7] But Hindu culture forms a deep substratum underlying many of the societies of the region, and it is partly on this substratum that India hopes to build the foundations for future engagement.

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has a decidedly Indian flavor, while the Mahayana Buddhism practiced by a majority of the populations of Singapore and Vietnam—and by large diaspora minorities in Malaysia and Indonesia—has a cultural legacy much more closely linked to China.

[6] An articulation of this prohibition can be found in the Dharmasutra of Baudhayana (II.1.2.2): the very first entry under Baudhayana's list of sins causing loss of caste is "undertaking a sea voyage," an offense he includes alongside robbing a Brahmin. The sage notes, however, that "When people have done any one of these, they should eat a little at every fourth meal-time; bathe at dawn, noon and dusk; and remain standing during the day and seated at night. In three years they wipe off their sin" (II.1.2.9–10). Translation by Patrick Olivelle, *The Dharmasutras: The Law Codes of Ancient India: The Law Codes of Ancient India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 166.

[7] According to Indonesia's 2010 census there were 4 million Hindus in the overall population, which was then 237 million. (Terrence H. Hull, "Estimates of Indonesian Population Numbers: First Impressions from the 2010 Census, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2010, pp. 371–375; also Indonesia-Investments, "Religion in Indonesia," undated.) The population of Bali is about 3.9 million, of whom about 3.6 million (92 percent) are Hindu World Atlas website, "Bali," undated.

The physical remains of Southeast Asia's Hindu past are often visible today—the Vaishnavite temples of the oldest layers Angkor Wat[8] in Cambodia; the Saivite temples at My Son in Vietnam and Vat Phou in Laos; the temples to Vishnu, Shiva, and many of their associated deities at Prambanan in Indonesia. One of India's most notable exercises of "soft power" has been its aid in restoring ancient Hindu temples in Southeast Asia, including archeologically dubious work at Angkor Wat.[9]

But the Hindu legacy in Southeast Asia is not limited to lifeless stone. It lives on in daily life, and in beloved popular culture. The modern languages of Indonesia and Malaysia are full of Sanskritic words—and not merely for esoteric concepts: in Bahasa, Indonesia, for example, the words for "teacher," "name," and "bath" (*guru*, *nama*, and *mandi*) are identical to those in Sanskrit. One of the most important books on India's security strategy in Southeast Asia, C. Raja Mohan's *Samudra Manthan*,[10] takes its title from the Hindu myth of how the gods achieved immortality by "churning the ocean;" today, a depiction of this episode from the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* is the centerpiece of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport. It is not entirely surprising that the great Hindu saga *Ramayana* should be the national epic of Buddhist Thailand, where it is called the *Ramakien*: Every Thai monarch since 1782 has taken the name of Rama, and the great Siamese kingdom of Ayutthaya took its name from that of the holy king Rama's capital

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[8] On December 21, 2012, in the "Vision Statement ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit," leaders of the respective nations pledged, "We will intensify efforts to preserve, protect and restore symbols and structures representing civilisational bonds between ASEAN and India, including Angkor Wat in the Kingdom of Cambodia, Borobudur and Prambanan temples in the Republic of Indonesia, Wat Phu in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Bagan in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Sukhothai Historical Park in the Kingdom of Thailand, and My Son in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam." ASEAN, "Vision Statement ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit," December 21, 2012b, Section 19.

[9] Interview with senior scholar of Southeast Asia, Singapore, January 17, 2013. A retired Indian army officer who spent significant time during his active duty interacting with Vietnamese counterparts noted the Champa temples as a point of commonality. Interview with retired Indian Army flag officer, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

[10] C. Raja Mohan, 2012c.

Ayodhya. What is more surprising is that the very same Hindu saga would also be the national epic of overwhelmingly Muslim Indonesia.[11]

A seed planted much more recently may turn out to be the most reliable bearer of fruit: Indian diaspora communities throughout Southeast Asia. Indian traders, travelers, and conquerors had been a presence in the region for millennia: two sources interviewed for this study noted that India's medieval Chola Empire included large parts of what are now Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.[12] After a gap of more than half a millennium, Indians returned to Southeast Asia in the 19th century under the umbrella of British colonial rule. They were overwhelmingly Tamil, as the Cholas had been—Tamil Nadu occupies the stretch of India's mainland coastline closest to maritime Southeast Asia, and Tamils played important mercantile and administrative roles throughout the British Raj. Today, the Indian diaspora communities of Southeast Asia are most prominent in Malaysia and Singapore. In Malaysia, they are estimated to account for 7.2 percent of the population (see Figure 6.4), but may number more;[13] in Singapore, Tamil is one of four recognized

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[11] The epic is also an important national tale in Laos and Cambodia, where it is retold under the titles of *Phra Lak Phra Lam* and Reamker, respectively, and treated as a set of Jataka tales about the past lives of the Buddha. The earliest Indonesian version is said to date to the 9th century; the epic is well-beloved in Malaysia as well, adapted as *Hikayat Seri Rama*. One former advisor to an Indian prime minister emphasized the antiquity of India's cultural ties to maritime as well as mainland Southeast Asia: "Why do you think the largest nation in the region is called *Indo*-nesia?" (Interview with former strategic advisor to an Indian prime minister, 2013.) For a discussion of local versions of the epic Ramayana in both Indonesia and Thailand, particularly the Iramavataram of Kamban popular among the Tamil diaspora of Southeast Asia, see Jonah Blank, "Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition/Seeking Mahadevi: Constructing the Identities of the Hindu Great Goddess," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 104, No. 4, December 2002, pp. 1228–1230.

[12] This Tamil empire lasted nine centuries: from the fourth to the 13th century; it reached its geographical peak under Rajendra Chola I around 1030. Interview with former senior Indian security official, and interview with former Indian liaison to ASEAN, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

[13] Malaysian government data from 2010 tallied the Indian population at 7.3 percent. (Malaysia Department of Statistics, *Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristics Report,* 2010), and at least one source interviewed expressed the opinion that the community had grown rather than shrunk since that time. Interview with former Indian liaison to ASEAN, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

languages, and its Indian community is estimated to represent as much as 3 percent of the populace—including, at the time of writing, the current Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.[14]

Are these cultural linkages merely the fraying remnants of ancient history? Not in the view of Indian policymakers. The Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which will likely be in firm control of the government until the next general election in 2019, has reshaped the politics of India through an appeal based squarely on the proposition that Hindu values should be the nation's guiding principles.[15] It is common for BJP leaders to lace their stump speeches with stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In fact, the BJP first emerged as a significant political party in the late 1980s, fueled largely by a campaign to reclaim the mythical birth site in the town of Ayodhya of Sri Ram, the hero of the *Ramayana*.[16]

Such practice is hardly confined to the BJP. One former top-level security official and loyal Congress Party leader saw the Hindu epics as the truest reflection of India's identity: The best way to understand how and why India will befriend or go to war with another country is to read the Sanskrit *puranas*.[17] But Prime Minister Narendra Modi spent most of his 20s and 30s as a *kar sevak*, or cadre, of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the hard-line Hindu Nationalist organiza-

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[14] See Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion of the role of the Tamil diaspora on India's possible future policy toward Southeast Asia. In 2012, Singapore's government estimated the percentage of Indian residents at 9.2 percent of the population (Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry, Department of Statistics, *Population Trends 2014*, p. 5). The figure of 13 percent comes from more recent data. Indian Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, "Population (Estimate/Assumed) of Overseas Indians: Countrywise," web page, updated January 2015.

[15] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998; Thom Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999; and Jyotirmay Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism*, New York: Penguin Books, 2004.

[16] The 1990 Ram Rath Yatra, conducted by then-BJP president and current party elder statesman L. K. Advani, was one of the decisive events laying the foundation for the BJP's rise to enduring major-party status.

[17] Interview with former senior Indian security official.

tion that serves as an umbrella groups for most of the *Hindutva* groups in the country. With Modi and the BJP securely in power, India's cultural and religious ties to Southeast Asia will gain a fresh relevance in the eyes of policymakers.

At a minimum, ancient ties of culture help explain why Indian leaders of all parties have put relatively little effort into building the relationship with Southeast Asia. From their view, such a relationship was built centuries ago.

The Legacy of Nonalignment: Look East Policy, Perception of Benign Intent

A more modern cause for India's sanguine approach to the region lies in Delhi's self-conceptualization as a uniquely benevolent actor: India's actions, unlike those of China or the United States (so the narrative goes), could not possibly be seen as threatening by the countries of Southeast Asia.

The roots of modern India's self-conceptualization as a linchpin of pan-Asian unity date to the later decades of British colonial rule. A series of Indian intellectuals, most notably Rabindranath Tagore, sought to position India in the cultural context of Asia rather than that of the Raj; in 1927, Tagore spent four months touring Southeast Asia, and published his observations as *Java Jatrir Patra* (Letters of a Traveler to Java).[18] Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, this pan-Asianism dovetailed neatly with anticolonialist sentiments of populations throughout the continent—and particularly in Southeast Asia, where European colonialism had extended to every nation except Thailand. Britain governed the Federated Malay States, Ceylon, and Burma (territories to become Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar); Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos composed French Indochina; the Dutch East Indies

[18] The first Asian—indeed, the first non-European—to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, Tagore visited sites on the islands of Java and Bali in modern Indonesia; the cities Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, and Penang in modern Malaysia; the city-state of Singapore; and various places in modern Thailand. Java Jatrir Patra is available in *Rabindra Rachanabali (Collected Works of Rabindranath Tagore)*, Vol. 19, Calcutta: Viswabharati, 1957, cited in Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 308.

would achieve independence as Indonesia; Spain ruled the Philippines until 1898, when it ceded the territory to the United States; Portugal retained Timor Leste until 1975. The nations of East Asia had experienced humiliation at the hands of European powers, but in contrast to those of Southeast Asia, they had never been colonized by them—with the exception of small *entrepots* such as Hong Kong and Macau. By the onset of World War II, the experience of European colonization was a bond tying India to Southeast Asia in a relatively new manner.

The bond was strengthened by the propaganda of a very different colonial power: Imperial Japan. While Japan was viewed as a colonial aggressor in Korea and China, its ambitions elsewhere in Asia were still cloaked at this time. As Isabelle Saint-Mezard notes, "During the 1930s, Japanese foreign policy orchestrated the metaphor of Asia to legitimize resistance to Europe's colonial powers."[19] Even after Japan swept through one Southeast Asian territory after another following the outbreak of hostilities in 1941, it remained a source of pan-Asian inspiration to many. In India, this narrative—Japan as the Asian cousin, liberating its kinfolk from alien domination—found concrete expression through the creation of the Indian National Army led by Subhas Chandra Bose.

After India's independence, founding Prime Minister Nehru expanded the notion of pan-Asianism to a global stage, conceptualizing a community of decolonized nations that would be genuinely independent of both the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), or Soviet Union.[20] This Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) would be the core of Nehru's foreign policy for more than a decade, and one of the pillars of his legacy. Indeed, the ideals and aspi-

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[19] Isabelle Saint-Mezard, *Eastward Bound: India's New Positioning in Asia*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2006, p. 20. For discussion of pan-Asianism in India in the 1930s and 1940s, see pp. 175–190. For discussion of cultural and religious links, as well as discussion of India's role as an inspiration for Asianism, see pp. 251–279.

[20] Sinderpal Singh, "From Delhi to Bandung: Nehru, 'Indian-ness' and 'Pan-Asian-ness,'" *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2011, pp. 51–64; Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy—Selected Speeches, September 1946–April 1961*, New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1971, p. 17.

rations of Non-Alignment continue to exert a powerful influence on India's actions on the international stage to this day.

Throughout the Cold War era, the Indian National Congress Party, which Nehru led from India's independence until his death, held a near-monopoly on political power: between 1947 and 1992 (i.e., from the birth of post-colonial India until the demise of the Soviet Union), it governed for 40 out of 45 years. For 38 of these years, the prime minister's office was held by Nehru; his daughter, Indira Gandhi; and his grandson, Rajiv Gandhi. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty has maintained control over the Congress Party: today, Rajiv's widow, Sonia, makes the essential decisions in the party, and her son, Rahul, took on the family mantle in the 2014 elections. The nation's foreign policy elite—which until the mid-1990s almost uniformly belonged to the Congress Party—still carries the Nehruvian torch. One prominent policymaker who served in Congress Party governments noted that his colleagues remained stuck in a Non-Aligned mindset long after the Soviet Union collapsed.[21]

The high point of Nehru's NAM came in Southeast Asia itself, at the Bandung Conference in 1955. The vision of pan-Asian unity, however, lasted less than a decade: Maoist China's support for Communist movements throughout Southeast Asia in the 1960s gave rise to ASEAN. Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia faced Beijing-backed plots, conspiracies, or outright insurgency. Burma, which would essentially shut itself off from the rest of the world in 1962, had faced Communist revolts and coup attempts since declaring independence. Singapore also confronted a political Communist threat prior to and immediately after independence.

Nehru himself saw his vision of "*Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai*" (loosely translated, "Indians and Chinese are brethren") abruptly terminated in 1962. After a worsening of ties that New Delhi only partially

[21] A former senior Indian security official explained, "Today, we welcome the U.S. presence in Asia, while we used to see it as an imperialist power. I had some role in bringing about this change: The foreign policy elite was stuck in a Non-Aligned mindset, but I didn't fall into that category because I was never part of the elite."

recognized,[22] China invaded India's northern territory of Ladakh, and turned back only after inflicting the most humiliating military defeat in India's modern history. Nehru died in 1964, still embittered, and the NAM turned into a *de facto* pro-Soviet bloc. As Saint-Mezard notes, "Delhi started leaning increasingly on the USSR and finally signed an Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty, in 1971. This decision was diametrically opposed to its interests in SouthEast Asia, where most nations supported the West."[23]

While Indira Gandhi tried to play a role in ASEAN's formation from 1966 to 1967, India's new flavor of pro-Soviet Non-Alignment left the nation largely friendless in Southeast Asia: The non-Communist regimes were squarely lined up with the United States, while the region's Communist regimes and subnational movements were almost uniformly aligned with Beijing rather than Moscow. The exception was the Viet Cong, which would not assume national power until 1976.[24] As an IAF officer who commanded a MiG squadron during this period put it, "The Cold War was on—and we were the primary friend of Public Enemy Number One."[25] The poor relations went even deeper than geopolitics. At the height of the 1971 crisis that would give birth to Bangladesh,

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[22] From Beijing's perspective, India prompted the deterioration of ties by offering refuge to the Dalai Lama in 1959; from New Delhi's perspective, this episode should not have derailed the larger relationship. For a discussion of China's view of the prelude to the 1962 war, including what Beijing regarded as clear signaling of intentions and warnings, see Alan Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1975. Additional discussion is provided by John Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Strategic Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001.

[23] Saint-Mezard, 2006, p. 190.

[24] The Viet Cong gained *de facto* control when the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon fell on April 30, 1975. The governments of North and South Vietnam were officially united as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam more than a year later, in July 1976. For India's estrangement from the rest of Southeast Asia during the formation of ASEAN, see S. D. Muni, "India's 'Look East' Policy: The Strategic Dimension," Institute of South Asian Studies Working Paper No. 121, February 2011a, pp. 5–6.

[25] Interview with retired IAF air commodore, New Delhi, April 10, 2013. Another Indian flag officer, who served as Defense Attaché in the region during the Cold War, put it, "From the standpoint of most of Southeast Asia, we were on the wrong [i.e., pro-Soviet] side." (Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.) Southeast Asian nations that fell into China's

U.S. President Richard Nixon is said to have remarked, "I don't like the Indians."[26]

Relations between India and Southeast Asia remained frosty throughout the 1970s, and became even chillier when India gave diplomatic support to Vietnam's 1978–1979 invasion of Cambodia.[27] As a retired Indian general put it, "After our war with China, we withdrew from the region for 15 years; when we re-engaged, it was an unpopular side."[28] Most ASEAN members strongly opposed Vietnam's move, with Laos as the notable exception. Both the Communist regime in Beijing and anti-Communist regimes in capitals from Washington to Jakarta banded together to condemn a Stalinist regime's ouster of a Maoist clique guilty of genocide.

The ice began to break only with the demise of the Soviet Union.[29] Even in the early 1990s, a U.S. diplomat stationed in Delhi recalls that policymaking circles were still in "a Bandung mindset."[30] The real impetus for India's re-engagement with East Asia, however,

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sphere rather than that of the United States had a similarly wary view of India's ties with the Soviet Union.

[26] Quoted in Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide*, New York: Vintage, 2014, p. 5. Bass suggests that this distaste was exacerbated by the fondness that Nixon's archrival John F. Kennedy had for India, a fondness shared in the 1960s and 1970s by such Nixonian bugbears as Democrats, liberals, and hippies. Bass, 2014, p. 6.

[27] Vietnamese forces invaded what was then called Democratic Kampuchea on December 25, 1978, and captured Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979. India sided with the Soviet bloc against most Western nations, China, and much of the rest of the international community. The Khmer Rouge regime in exile continued to hold Cambodia's seat at the United Nations until 1993.

[28] Interview with retired Indian Army major general, New Delhi, April 8, 2013. He also cited good relations following Bandung, especially with Malaysia and Singapore.

[29] Some sources see the beginnings of the Look East policy in the 1980s: S. D. Muni (a former Indian ambassador to Cambodia) describes Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's outreach to Southeast Asian nations between 1985–1989, and his 1988 visit to China, as the true initiation of the policy (Muni, 2011a, p. 8). According to a retired IAF officer close to Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, the visit came after Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev told Indian leaders that he would not stand in the way of closer relations between Delhi and Beijing. Interview with retired IAF air commodore, 2013.

[30] Interview with retired senior Western diplomat, Washington, D.C., February 27, 2013.

was economic rather than geopolitical: India's Look East policy, while grounded in ideas first articulated in the colonial era and deepened by Nehruvian Non-Alignment, took on its current name and shape only after the country's balance of payment crisis of 1991.

Four decades of Nehruvian socialism were shaken by the overwhelming embarrassment of India being forced to request an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout and pawn 67 tons of gold to foreign banks.[31] This shock resulted in the domestic economic liberalization reforms instituted by Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, and prompted these figures to look for economic lessons from the countries that were then referred to as the "Asian tigers."[32] Some observers place the roots of India's liberalization program earlier, in the tenure of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (1984–1989);[33] regardless of its deeper foundations, the financial crisis of 1991 rendered the need for a new economic model undeniable. According to one retired Indian official who served during this period, the focus of the eastward search was originally *only* on Southeast Asia—particularly nations such as Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia, whose economies were then booming; it was later in the 1990s, this official said, that the Look East policy came to be focused on Asia as a whole.[34] A diplomat who served as India's liaison with ASEAN said, "*our* pivot to Asia" was sparked by the balance-of-payment crisis, even if the Look

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[31] Arunabha Ghosh, "Pathways Through Financial Crisis: India," *Global Governance*, Vol. 12, No. 4, October-December 2006, pp. 413–429. For an in-depth discussion of the effect of Rao's economic liberalization program on the Look East policy and desire to catch up with the "New Asia," see Saint-Mezard, 2006, pp. 33–45 and 190–202.

[32] Singh himself, during his subsequent tenure as prime minister, has on occasion downplayed the economic side of the shift: In 2006, he stated that the Look East policy was "not merely an external economic policy, it was also a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the evolving global economy. Most of all, it was about reaching out to our (India's) civilisational Asian neighbors." Manmohan Singh, "Address by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Asia Society Corporate Conference," New Delhi: Government of India, Press Information Bureau, March 18, 2006.

[33] For an example of such an argument, see Vanita Shastri, "The Politics of Economic Liberalization in India," *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1997, pp. 27–56.

[34] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

East policy was not formally announced until 1992.[35] He said that, in his view, the NAM still had traction in the region.

As for India's current ruling party, the BJP had always viewed Nehru and his vision with thinly veiled contempt. The entire philosophy of *Hindutva* stands in opposition to Nehru's vision of India as a multireligious, multicultural, polyglot nation. The BJP's parent organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, fought bitterly against Nehru's desire to enshrine his ideals in the nation's constitution: After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 by a member of a rival Hindu Nationalist organization, the RSS was temporarily banned, and remained a marginal presence during the decades of national identity consolidation.

Hindu Nationalist ideology has little use for the Nehruvian label, but it too advocates a fiercely independent foreign policy role for India. When the BJP came to power in 1998,[36] Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee conducted a foreign policy that avoided any sort of clear alignment. He presided over one of the warmest periods in U.S.-Indian relations, yet he undertook a nuclear test that sparked the most severe set of U.S. sanctions ever imposed on India. In 2000, Vajpayee referred to the United States and India as "natural allies"—but in 2003 he resisted extreme pressure to contribute troops to the U.S.-led campaign in Iraq.[37] The same refusal to enter into any sort of alignment or alliance was characteristic of India's relationship with Russia, China, and other nations during Vajpayee's tenure. This unwillingness to join a geopolitical bloc led by a more powerful nation meshes comfortably, however, with an increased engagement with India's smaller neighbors in Southeast Asia. A Hindutva-inflected Look East policy embraces the cultural and civilizational ties between India and many Southeast Asian nations, and views these ties as the basis for a grouping that is,

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[35] Interview with former Indian liaison to ASEAN, 2013.

[36] The BJP first held power for 16 days in 1994, but was not in office long enough to have a policy impact.

[37] Atal Bihari Vajpayee, *Address to the Asia Society*, New York: Asia Society, September 7, 2000.

paradoxically, not dissimilar to the genuinely nonaligned community envisioned by Nehru himself.[38]

To some degree, even India's Congress-leaning political elite regard Nehruvian ideas, and Non-Alignment in particular, as a philosophy for the 20th rather than the 21st century. When a group of distinguished Indian thinkers put out a report entitled *Nonalignment 2.0* in 2012,[39] it was fully embraced by neither the Congress government nor the BJP opposition—even policy-shapers closely aligned with the report's authors said in interviews that they did not endorse such nomenclature.[40] Yet there remains a near-consensus among policymakers across the political spectrum on one of Nehru's core beliefs: India is, and always will be, a disinterested and benign international player. "We're not like China," said one retired Indian diplomat. "We're not overbearing."[41] Regardless of the nomenclature used to describe it, the aversion to any sort of geostrategic alignment is shared by policymakers of all stripes. "We don't want to be allies," said a retired Indian diplomat. "We want to be equals."[42] In December 2012, India and ASEAN held a summit commemorating a decade of exchange, and the Vision Statement issued by the heads of state can be read as a status report on

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[38] For discussion of Hindutva views of the Look East policy, see Saint-Mezard, 2006, pp. 202–219.

[39] Sunil Khilnani, Rajiv Kumar, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Lt. Gen. (ret.) Prakash Menon, Nandan Nilekani, and Srinath Raghavan, *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century*, New Delhi: Center for Policy Research, 2012.

[40] For a sample of views on *Nonalignment 2.0*, see H. S. Lidder, "Non Alignment 2.0," *Defence and Security Alert*, March 2013; Anil Chopra, "Non Alignment 2.0: India's Grand Strategy," *Defence and Security Alert*, March 2013; Harsh V. Pant, "The Dangers of Non-Alignment," *Defence and Security Alert*, March 2013a; Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Nonalignment 2.0: A Realist Critique of An Establishmentarian Perspective," IDSA Comment, New Delhi, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, May 1, 2012; and Ashley J. Tellis, *Nonalignment Redux: The Perils of Old Wine in New Skins*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012.

[41] Interview with retired Indian Administrative Service officer, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

[42] Interview with former Indian liaison to ASEAN, 2013. It is noteworthy that, in his formulation, an "ally" is understood to be something inherently less than an "equal."

the relationship; it is 1,823 words long—and two words specifically not found in the communiqué are "China" and "America."[43]

Is this *de facto* nonalignment a one-way street? One certainly finds far more nostalgia for Nehruvian Indo-Asian unity in Delhi than in any of the capitals of Southeast Asia. Indian theorists see a millennia-old civilizational relationship that was reinvigorated after the nations of Asia shook off their colonial shackles, suffered a temporary setback during the Cold War, and is now returning to its natural warmth. In Southeast Asia, however, the focus is more likely to be on the future than on the past. As a Singapore-based scholar framed the issue, "Why, despite Bandung, Nehru, and the Non-Aligned Movement, does ASEAN look to the U.S. rather than to India? Because the U.S. has the power and the history. Who will balance China? The U.S. will—India may, or may not."[44]

Elements of Indian Strategy: Connectivity, Trade, Energy, Diplomatic Institutions, Security Cooperation, Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief, Balancer for China

What is India looking to get out of its engagement with Southeast Asia? The remainder of the chapter briefly outlines the areas most important to New Delhi, as articulated by policy-shapers in interviews and documents.

Connectivity

Whenever one discusses Southeast Asia with an Indian government official, the word "connectivity" is quick to arise. The topic is one of the five sections marked for particular emphasis in the 2012 ASEAN-

[43] According to a key member of the Eminent Persons Group (the Track II group that drafted much of the communiqué's language), the absence of China and the United States from the document was quite intentional. (Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013.) For text of communiqué, see ASEAN, 2012b.

[44] Interview with senior scholar of Southeast Asia, 2013.

India Vision Statement.[45] One of the drafters of this statement said in an interview that "the greatest benefit to the India-ASEAN partnership would be connectivity."[46] In this context, connectivity generally means infrastructure, ease of transportation, and flow of people and products throughout the region.[47]

Land connectivity. The two most ambitious infrastructure plans are for a highway linking Kolkata to Ho Chi Minh City, and railway linking New Delhi to Hanoi. "It should be possible," one Indian policymaker said, "to drive from Kolkata to Laos in a single day."[48] Both projects are envisioned as being constructed in pieces, so that each step would improve connectivity along the way. The road piece, for example, would extend a highway from India's remote Northeastern states through Myanmar into Thailand, where it would link up with Thailand's own road systems to extend through Cambodia and Laos, then terminate in Vietnam. Funds for the project would come from India, the governments of the nations through which the highway would pass, and the Asian Development Bank and other external lending institutions. The rail project would extend India's existing lines

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[45] The two sections on connectivity read: "(23). We are committed to enhancing ASEAN Connectivity through supporting the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity and the ASEAN ICT Master Plan 2015. In this regard, we encourage the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee to work closely with India's Inter-Ministerial Group on ASEAN Transport Connectivity to enhance air, sea and land connectivity within ASEAN and between ASEAN and India, through ASEAN-India connectivity projects. We are also determined to cooperate and make the best use of all available resources, including financial and technical assistance, investment and public-private partnership to achieve physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity within ASEAN and with India. (24). We are committed to assisting in the completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Lao PDR and Cambodia and the new highway project connecting India-Myanmar-Lao PDR-Viet Nam-Cambodia as well as developing the Mekong-India Economic Corridor (MIEC) connecting Southeast Asia to South Asia on the eastern part of India in order to add greater momentum to the growing trade and investment linkages between ASEAN and India." ASEAN, 2012b.

[46] Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013.

[47] For an overall assessment of the connectivity between South Asia and Southeast Asia, see Asian Development Bank, *Connecting South Asia and Southeast Asia: Interim Report*, Tokyo: Asian Development Bank/ADB Institute, 2013.

[48] Identifying description and date of interview withheld at request of interviewee.

through Myanmar, and coordinate the gauges necessary for a seamless journey through five or six nations.

So far, both projects remain aspirational. India has made improvements on the portion of the highway that runs through its own northeastern states, but it remains a very modest two-lane road, unsuitable for significantly increased traffic. Beyond the Indian border town of Moreh, no work has been done to extend the highway into Myanmar; without Indian investment, there is unlikely to be any road to Mandalay.[49] India and Myanmar, however, agreed in August 2013 to set a 2016 deadline to complete the highway linking "Guwahati in Assam to Burma's border with Thailand via Mandalay and the former capital Rangoon."[50] The construction of a modern rail line through Myanmar, compatible with the Indian system, seems an even less likely endeavor. Most of India's rail lines are broad gauge, many of those in the mountainous northeast are narrow gauge—and neither would easily be able to share rolling stock with Myanmar's meter-gauge trains.[51]

While Southeast Asian sources have expressed doubt about these projects extending beyond India's borders, some close observers of Indian policy voiced skepticism of them even extending that far. There is concern that the roads would be risky investments, given security challenges posed by insurgent groups operating in the area and the logistical difficulty of building roads in India's remote Northeast.[52] "India's ability to connect or engage with Southeast Asia by land will

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[49] The Tri-Nation Highway is projected to run from Moreh to Mandalay, and then onward to Yangon and into Thailand via the district of Mae Sot. But given China's overwhelming commercial presence in Mandalay, it seems highly unlikely that any funding would be forthcoming from Beijing for a road that would enable trade moving west rather than east. For more on the two countries' competition for influence in Myanmar, see Thant Myint-U, *Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia,* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012.

[50] Dean Nelson, "India to Open Super Highway to Burma and Thailand," *The Telegraph*, August 8, 2013.

[51] It is mechanically possible for a train to run on different gauges of track, through the use of different bogies (undercarriages). Mass conversion of rolling stock without easily detachable bogies to a more flexible configuration, however, is a formidable challenge.

[52] In terms of logistics and road building, India's remote Northeast lacks resources, and the type of soil does not support building tar roads. It would also be costly to transport all the

be undermined by governance failures in the Northeastern states," said one observer of Indian politics. "A lot of the money pledged for infrastructure projects in the Northeast never leaves Delhi, and very little of what actually reaches these states is spent very well."[53] Another source noted that the problem was not a lack of funds—"Delhi allocates 10 percent of its budget for the states to the Northeast and makes the area a loss-leader," he said—but rather the corruption and mismanagement associated with these expenditures.[54]

The cabinet appointments of the Modi government may provide some political weight to land connectivity projects. The Minister of Road Transport and Highways is Nitin Gadkhari, who served as president of the BJP from 2010 to 2013 and contributed to its drastic turnaround after the 2009 electoral defeat. The Minister of Railways is D. V. Sadananda Gowda, a significant regional figure in the BJP's expansion of its base into southern India, who has served as chief minister of the state of Karnataka. Moreover, the Minister of State for Northeastern Development is Gen. (ret.) V. K. Singh—one of the very few former military officers to enter political life in India, and a high-profile figure in BJP circles.

Sea connectivity. Much has been written on India's interest in maintaining open lines of shipping through indispensable maritime transit points in Southeast Asia, particularly the Strait of Malacca. The influential analyst C. Raja Mohan is the most prominent writer to address this issue,[55] and protection of the sea lines is a central reason that the Indian Navy has been far more forward-leaning on its engagement with the United States than has the IAF. Two current Indian

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necessary equipment and manpower to the Northeast to construct the roads. See Shruti Pandalai, "China Entices Myanmar as India Struggles to 'Look East,'" IDSA, April 25, 2011.

[53] Western source interviewed in India. According to Indian government sources, "only 30 percent of the roads in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, and 50 percent of the roads in Assam and Manipur had been completed between 2005 and 2009." See Akshay Mathur, "A Winning Strategy for India's North-East," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 2011, p. 283, for a citation of the Indian government's annual report for 2010.

[54] Foreign source interviewed in India.

[55] C. Raja Mohan, 2012c.

policymakers stressed the importance of maintaining India's free access to the Pacific, and one of them noted that Indian naval vessels had recently completed a six-month expedition making port calls throughout the region.[56]

Apart from the Strait of Malacca (open passage of which is an interest shared with India by the United States, Japan, China, and all states in the region), perhaps India's most noteworthy contribution to maritime connectivity lies at Sittwe port. India is in the process of refurbishing a collection of naval facilities at this site in Myanmar's Rakhine State that would facilitate shipping goods to Southeast Asia from Kolkata, Chennai, and other Indian ports. When Prime Minister Singh visited Myanmar in May 2012, he offered a $500 million line of credit for this and other projects.[57]

The port at Sittwe is projected to be the hub of a much larger Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project: This intertwined sea, river, and surface project would connect not only India to Myanmar, but the Western coast of India with the country's isolated Northeastern states. A modernized and upgraded Sittwe port, dredged to permit the transit of deepwater ships, would have two commercial routes flowing north into the Indian state of Mizoram, one by the Kaladan river (by which low-draft vessels could sail up to Mizoram), the other by upgrading a 158-kilometer road to Paletwa (which would also have a river port, for intermediary Kaladan access), another 129 kilometers from Paletwa to the border post of Myeikwa; the road would then meet a new extension of India's National Highway 54, which is linked to the rest of the nation's highway system. So far, however, little construction has been done and the intended project could impose significant environmental, social, and economic costs to farmers and citizens living near the areas of construction.[58] While National Highway 54

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[56] Identifying characteristics of these currently serving officials withheld at their request.

[57] "India Extends $500 Million Line of Credit to Myanmar," *Economic Times*, March 28, 2012.

[58] Daniel Schearf, "Burma-India Transport Project Raises Opportunities, Concerns," *Voice of America*, June 17, 2013; Adam Halliday, "Mizoram-Myanmar Link Project Hits Forest Ministry Roadblock," *Indian Express*, July 30, 2013.

has reportedly been extended, no roadwork has been done in Myanmar to date; two international observers interviewed in Yangon, both of them deeply involved in infrastructure development, were unaware of any Indian involvement in Sittwe port improvements. A Western diplomatic source reported, however, that work was proceeding, albeit slowly.[59] By contrast, in July 2013, China began importing natural gas from Myanmar's offshore fields through a 793-kilometer pipeline stretching from the Chinese-built port facilities at Kyaukpyu to the Chinese province of Yunnan. The construction of both the pipeline and the port facilities took about three years.[60]

Nitin Gadkari, the politically powerful former BJP president, holds the ministerial portfolio for shipping as well as roads. His appointment as Minister of Transport could give a boost to sea connectivity as well as land transit projects.

Air connectivity. While the IAF has not sought basing, or even access rights, at Southeast Asian air bases, Delhi would like to see India more tightly knitted to the commercial flight patterns of the region. India's commercial air connections with Southeast Asia are a fraction of those connecting China to the region (see Figure 3.1), or the nations of ASEAN to each other. This is a reflection of India's comparatively poor infrastructure for commercial aviation, and lack of Indian-flagged international routes commensurate with India's population or passenger traffic. Prime Minister Modi's decision to award the Ministry for Civil Aviation to a little-known figure in a regional party suggests that improvement of air connectivity may not receive strong backing from the Prime Minister's Office.[61]

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[59] Interviews with Asia-based official involved with international finance, and with official involved with development in Southeast Asia, Yangon, April 5, 2013; diplomatic source: identifying information withheld at request of interviewee.

[60] Leslie Hook, "China Starts Importing Natural Gas from Myanmar," *Financial Times*, July 29, 2013. Some Indian sources have pointed to the port at Dawei (where development by Thai-owned companies is a work in progress) as a potential link between the Indian port of Chennai and Myanmar's market. Ranjana Narayan, "India to Link with Myanmar Port to Boost ASEAN Connectivity," *Business Standard*, August 11, 2013.

[61] The Minister of Civil Aviation is Pusapati Ashok Gajapathi Raju, a member of the Telegu Desam Party (TDP) based in Andhra Pradesh. Raju, a member of the royal Gajapathi family

New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport was far below international standards until the opening of its Terminal 3 in 2010; as recently as the 1990s, the public clock in the international departure area was sometimes operated manually.[62] Routine traffic snarls on all roads connecting central New Delhi to local airports has reportedly prompted Prime Minister Modi to build a special tunnel linking his official residence with Safdarjung Airport.[63] Construction necessary to bring Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport up to modern standards had been delayed for well over a decade, and at the time of writing remains uncompleted.[64] Similar stories could be told of airports in Kolkata and Chennai, the only two cities on the Bay of Bengal offering direct flights to Southeast Asia: Both, like the inland cities of Hyderabad and Benglaru, are improved over the rudimentary infrastructure of the 1990s, but neither comes close to offering the level of service provided by Singapore's Changi Airport, Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, or a host of facilities in other Asian countries. As of May 2015, India had only 394 direct flights each week to only four cities in Southeast Asia, compared with China's 1,614 direct flights to 23 cities; India had direct connections to only four nations in the region (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar), while China had many direct flights to all ten ASEAN nations.[65]

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with no prior experience in managing civil aviation, appears to have been chosen as a favor to the leadership of the TDP, which is part of the BJP's National Democratic Alliance. Selection of TDP leader N. Chandrababu Naidu for the post would have signaled a stronger political commitment to civil aviation, but Naidu is serving as the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh.

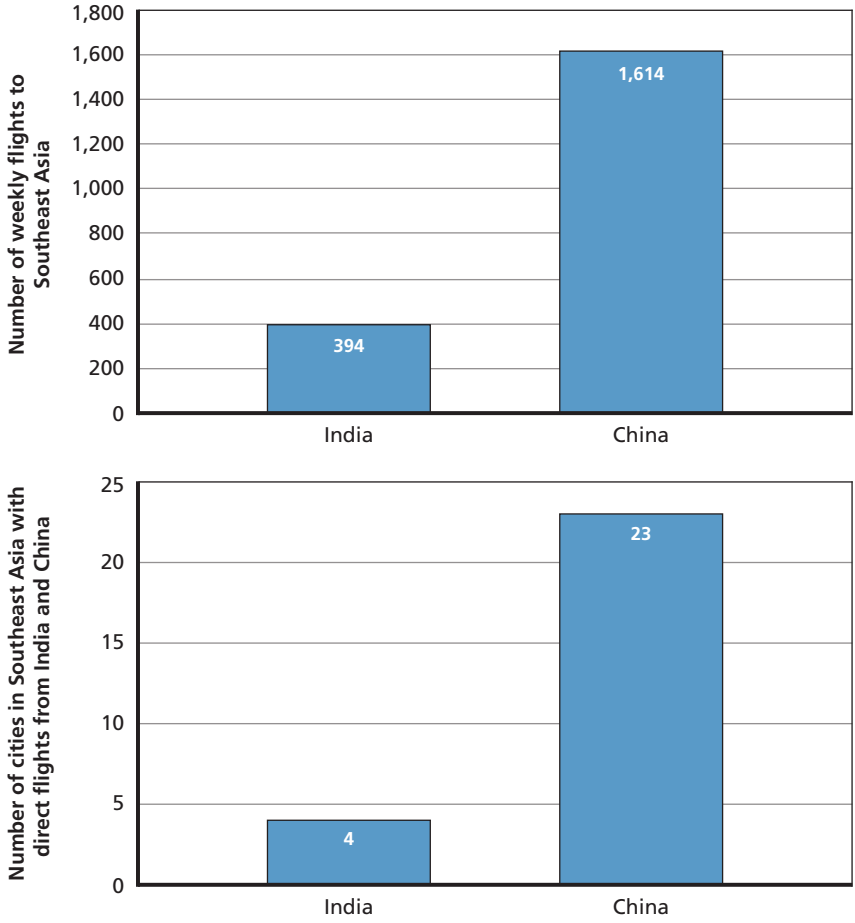
62 Blank, 2000, p. 72.

63 "Special Tunnel Being Built for Narendra Modi from 7 RCR to Safdarjung Airport," *ZeeNewsIndia.com*, May 29, 2014. Safdarjung is a small airport, called Willingdon Airfield during colonial times, from which high-ranking Indian officials often board a helicopter for transit to the much larger Indira Gandhi International Airport.

64 For background on delays, see "Mumbai Airport Modernization Likely to Be Delayed to 2014," *Live Mint*, December 14, 2011.

65 This research was derived from a May 13, 2015, search on the travel website Kayak for flights departing the week of May 17–23, 2015.

Figure 3.1
Direct Flights from India and China to ASEAN Nations



SOURCE: Derived from a May 13, 2015, search on the travel website Kayak for flights departing the week of May 17–23, 2015. Universe of flights drawn from route maps of major Indian and Chinese airlines serving Southeast Asia (with additional flights operated by smaller carriers, as well as by Southeast Asian and out-of-region carriers, drawn from Kayak database): Air India, Jet Airways, IndiGo, SpiceJet, Air China, China Southern Airlines, China Eastern Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Dragon Air, Sichuan Airlines, Shandong Airlines, Air Macau, Xiamen Airlines, Shenzen Airlines, Juneyao Airlines.

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Trade

The foreign policy goals of the Modi administration are likely to be weighted toward expansion of India's trade, but this has been the dominant focus for more than 20 years. As noted above, India's Look East policy began with trade rather than politics. In 1992, following the evaporation of India's longtime friend the Soviet Union, Delhi had to scramble to adjust to the new geostrategic realities. More immediately, however, the nation was in the midst of an economic crisis. Then–Finance Minister Manmohan Singh led a wrenching reform of India's hidebound economy, and Prime Minister Rao decided to set the nation on a path toward becoming another "Asian tiger." He wanted to learn from, and trade with, the booming economies of South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

India's trade with Southeast Asia has grown significantly in the two decades since. It may look sluggish in comparison with the phenomenal growth of Chinese trade,[66] or the growth of other partners such as the United States, but that is not the metric that Indian policymakers tend to use. They greatly want to increase India's trade with the region—but their comparison is with India's pre-1992 flatline, rather than with present-day competitors. From this vantage point, the recent past has been a great success.

Between 2001 and 2012, overall trade in goods between India and ASEAN increased more than tenfold: from $7.5 billion to $76.3 billion. For most of this period, the ASEAN countries enjoyed a favorable trade balance with India. In 2012 the ASEAN countries exported $42.8 billion in goods to India and imported $33.5 billion. Within Southeast Asia, India's most important trade partners are Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, which in 2012 accounted for 76 percent of India's imports and 73 percent of its exports to the region. Nevertheless, the India-ASEAN trade level remains relatively small compared

[66] For a chart showing one material element of the overall economic picture—China's country-by-country foreign direct investment (FDI) in ASEAN nations—see Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 12. For a discussion of India's trade and investment flows between India and Southeast Asia over the course of the past three decades, see Saint-Mezard, 2006, pp. 90–106.

to ASEAN's trade with China (ASEAN's largest trade partner), which amounted to $494 billion in 2012.[67]

An important milestone in India's trade with Southeast Asia is the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA). The initial framework agreement was put into practice in July 2004.[68] The parties agreed to work toward a free trade area in goods, services, and investment, to progressively eliminate tariff and nontariff barriers, and to establish a liberalized and transparent investment regime.[69] Over the next five years of talks, the parties tried to protect sensitive domestic sectors while seeking greater access to the other's market: India refused to roll back tariffs on petroleum, palm oil, pepper, tea, and coffee, while Malaysia and Indonesia sought larger access for their palm oil exports. An agreement was reached in January 2010 with Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore, and will extend to all ASEAN countries by 2016.[70]

The AIFTA created a free-trade area market of 1.8 billion people with a gross domestic product (GDP) of US$2.8 trillion.[71] Indian and ASEAN leaders have set trade targets of $100 billion by 2015 and $200 billion by 2022.[72] These predictions, however, may prove

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[67] IMF, *IMF Direction of Trade Statistics 2013*, Washington D.C., 2013. Trade is measured as the total value of goods imported and exported. Chinese trade is measured as total of mainland China and Hong Kong–China trade.

[68] Called the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Between the Republic of India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, it was signed in Bali in October 2003.

[69] ASEAN, "Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Between the Republic of India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Bali, October 8, 2003," 2003.

[70] ASEAN, "ASEAN-India Free Trade Area," undated-b; Mohit Anand, *India-ASEAN Relations: Analyzing Regional Implications*, New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, IPCS Special Report 72, May 2009; Udit Misra, "Inside Story of India-ASEAN FTA," *India Forbes*, October 22, 2009. AIFTA was signed in Bangkok in August 2009.

[71] ASEAN, "Overview of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations," undated-a.

[72] Geethanjali Nataraj and Rohit Sinha, Observer Research Foundation, "India–ASEAN FTA in Services: Good for the Region, Very Good for India," *East Asia Forum*, July 30, 2013. By way of comparison, the Beijing-based ASEAN-China Centre forecasts that ASEAN-China trade will reach $500 billion by 2015: "China-ASEAN Trade to Hit 500 Bln USD," *Xinhua*, July 24, 2013.

rather optimistic. A March 2011 study by Deloitte and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) anticipated that the success of the Free Trade Agreement would depend on the existence of good institutions and an efficient regulatory environment. The study argued that the Indian industries with a competitive advantage were in chemicals, medical and manufacturing, textiles, apparels and accessories, and handicrafts and carpets, while ASEAN countries have a comparative advantage in machinery and appliances and electrical equipment.[73]

Services and investment were not included in the 2009 Free Trade Agreement because the parties were not able to reach agreement on some fundamental issues.[74] Agreement was eventually reached when India dropped its demand that ASEAN open up its service sector further, including steps to cover independent professional services and contractual service suppliers at all levels; as a trade-off, ASEAN dropped its request for certain measures in financial services.[75]

The conclusion of the negotiations was announced at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in December 2012. The Deloitte-FICCI study indicates that India has a comparative advantage over ASEAN countries in the service sectors, such as computer and information services, telecommunications, e-commerce, and engineering services. In the area of financial and insurance services, India and ASEAN would compete on equal footing. The ASEAN nations have a greater advantage in construction services, shipping, and transportation services.[76]

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[73] Deloitte and FICCI, "India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement: Implications for the Indian Economy," March 2011.

[74] One of the sticking points was the ability of each nation's citizens to work in the other's market. India demanded greater access for its doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals in Southeast Asian countries, while countries like Indonesia and the Philippines feared the impact of such liberalization on their own professional classes. Deloitte and FICCI, 2011, p. 51.

[75] Linda Yulisman, "ASEAN, India Conclude FTA Talks on Services, Investment," *Jakarta Post*, December 20, 2012.

[76] Deloitte and FICCI, 2011, pp. 53–57.

Apart from its effects on India-ASEAN trade, the AIFTA had significant geopolitical importance. From an Indian perspective, it gives India a larger role in the ASEAN trade area, as well as a larger voice in the prospective economic integration of the Asia-Pacific region. A retired Indian brigadier noted that both India and Southeast Asia tend to view each other through the prism of what they hope to receive from the relationship rather than what they expect to give: Southeast Asia focuses on security, India focuses on trade.[77] It is worth remembering, however, that India's trade and overseas investment is in no way controlled by the government. India's business community, unlike that of China or of key ASEAN nations, has no coordinated strategy and does not see itself as an arm of national policy. As one American observer said, "We are the ones pushing India to implement its Look East policy!"[78]

Energy

A subset of trade, but significant enough for it to be broken out for special discussion, is India's quest for new energy sources. India has an ever-growing appetite for energy, and vastly insufficient domestic resources. "Our needs are immense and growing," said one Indian policymaker, "and nuclear will be slow to come on line; it will supply only a fraction of the needs, and post-Fukushima will be politically controversial."[79] A retired Indian military officer predicted, "The contest between India and China will be primarily over resources, particularly energy; each nation will try to counter what it fears the other is doing, fueled by mistrust and misunderstanding."[80]

India sees itself as overly reliant on Middle Eastern oil and gas, a prime source of friction with the United States. A policymaker noted that Indian compliance with American-initiated sanctions on Iranian oil and gas required significant sacrifice, and that the United States

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77 Interview with retired Indian Army officer and defense analyst, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

78 Interview with foreign source interviewed in India, date and location withheld at request of interviewee.

79 Identifying description and date of interview withheld at request of interviewee.

80 Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

had not offset this gap by permitting American export of oil and gas to India; an agreement to facilitate such supply, he suggested, "could be the equivalent of the civil nuclear deal in terms of pushing the U.S.-India relationship to a new level."[81]

India looks hungrily at gas fields in the South China Sea, and similarly unexploited resources in Myanmar, Indonesia, and the waters between Timor-Leste and Australia. Many Indian policy-shapers see the resources of Southeast Asia as the answer to their nation's long-term energy needs.[82]

To date, research suggests that India will gain little in the way of energy resources from Southeast Asia: The region's own energy needs are growing rapidly enough that most countries (apart from Brunei) are likely to be net importers rather than exporters of oil and gas. Indonesia, with enormous resources and potential, has already made this shift. Three academic sources interviewed in Singapore were unanimous in seeing no likelihood of India finding the answers to its energy conundrum in Southeast Asia. "There will be no significant resources opening up here in the next 20 years," said one. "There's nothing for India and China to fight over."[83]

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[81] Identifying description and date of interview withheld at request of interviewee. He noted that Saudi Arabia offers only 30 days of credit, while Iran offers 90 days, and that U.S. exports of oil and gas to India are essentially zero: Without a free trade agreement, significant legal barriers stand in the way of such exports (he said), and similarly prevent Indian energy companies from gaining access to American technology (for example, technology necessary to conduct hydraulic fracturing).

[82] A key member of the India-ASEAN Eminent Persons Group drew a sharp distinction between India's and China's attitudes toward energy. He predicted that "80 percent of the global energy supply" would be found in natural gas deposits of the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia—that is, in maritime areas between Mozambique and northern Australia/Timor Leste, most of which India considers to be its natural sphere of influence—but "we consider them a global asset; unlike the People's Republic, in the South China Sea, we have no desire to close this area off to other nations." Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013.

[83] Interview with senior scholar of Southeast Asia, 2013; interview with scholar of South Asia, Singapore, January 17, 2013; and interview with senior scholar of South and Southeast Asia, Singapore, January 17, 2013. The senior scholar of Southeast Asia and the senior scholar of South and Southeast Asia saw no evidence of significant Indian investment in Southeast Asian energy resources, and the senior scholar of Southeast Asia noted that all nations of the

India had approximately 5.5 billion barrels (bbl) of proven oil reserves as of end of 2012, the second-largest reserves in the Asia-Pacific region after China, but not nearly enough for its own needs. With the nation consuming 3.6 million barrels per day (mbl/d) in 2012, this pool could not supply India's domestic requirements for more than five years, even if every drop of oil were extracted, refined, and devoted to the domestic market. Today, India draws most of its oil from foreign sources: By 2011, India was the world's fourth-largest net importer of oil. In 2012, India imported more than 2.5 mbl/d, or about 70 percent of consumption. Most of this, 64 percent, comes from the Middle East.[84] Southeast Asia supplies only 2 percent of India's oil, with the largest suppliers being Malaysia (47,000 mbl/d) and Brunei (22,000 mbl/d).[85] India's imports from Iran (6 percent) are a great source of tension with the United States, and Washington has had to waive the provisions of the Iran Sanctions Act to avoid penalizing India.[86]

India had an estimated 43.8 trillion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves as of end of 2012—enough for 21 years' supply of domestic needs at current rates. But demand has far outstripped supply, and the country has been a net importer of natural gas since 2004. India does not have any pipeline connections, and all of the gas currently imported is in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG). In 2011, India imported 575 billion cubic feet of LNG, with a majority of gas from Qatar.[87] India's natural gas imports from Southeast Asia are negligible in comparison: In 2009–2010, India imported 0.82 billion cubic

region except Brunei face serious energy deficits of their own in the near future. All three sources noted that potential gas reserves in Myanmar and Indonesia are unproven and must be considered purely speculative.

84 U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), "India: Analysis," March 18, 2013c.

85 "Table—India's Country-Wise Crude Oil Imports Since 2001/02," Reuters, August 6, 2012.

86 EIA, 2013c; Santanu Choudhury and Rakesh Sharma, "India to Cut Iranian Oil Imports 11 Percent," *Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 2012. On Washington waiving sanctions: Prasanta Sanhu and Biman Mukherji, "New Delhi Looks to Buy More Iran Oil, Risks U.S. Ire," *Wall Street Journal*, August 12, 2013.

87 EIA, 2013c.

feet of LNG from Malaysia, 0.82 billion cubic feet from Papua New Guinea, and 0.26 billion cubic feet from Indonesia.[88]

The potential for Southeast Asia to meet a larger portion of India's energy needs is a driver of India's regional strategy—but it may well prove unrealistic. The energy reserves of Southeast Asia may prove insufficient for the region's own needs, let alone a deep new pool for export.

The amount of oil and gas reserves beneath the South China Sea remains unknown.[89] The EIA estimates that the South China Sea includes proved and probable reserves of 11 bbl of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Due to the territorial disputes, there are no agreed-upon figures, but these estimates are on the high end.[90] There is currently no proved or probable oil reserve estimates for the Spratlys and Paracels. The U.S. government estimates that the Spratly Island territory may contain significant reserves of undiscovered hydrocarbons ranging from 0.8 to 5.4 bbl of oil, and between 7.6 and 55.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in undiscovered resources. Industry sources, however, point to less than 100 billion cubic feet of currently economically viable natural gas reserves.[91]

India's state-owned oil company, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC), entered into a deal in 2011 with the Vietnamese state-owned oil company PetroVietnam to jointly explore in the South China Sea and reaffirmed its commitment in 2012 despite Chinese warnings. ONGC is active in two offshore blocks in southern Vietnam:

1. Block 0.61 is 370 km southeast of Vung Tau—one field has been developed and another was under development as of 2012.

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[88] Anne-Sophie Corbeau, "Natural Gas in India," International Energy Agency, 2010, Table 7, "Indian LNG Imports by Country."

[89] For a discussion of impact of South China Sea resources on regional security dynamic, see Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, pp. 6–7.

[90] For example, energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie estimates that the South China Sea contains only 2.5 bbl of oil equivalent in proved oil and gas reserves. See EIA, "South China Sea," February 7, 2013b.

[91] EIA, 2013b.

2. Block 128 is a deepwater block currently under exploration.

As of March 2012, ONGC had invested nearly $400 million in its venture in Vietnam.[92]

Malaysia—India's largest supplier of both oil and gas—has Asia's third-largest proven oil reserves, but nearly half of production goes for domestic consumption, and consumption has been rising as production has fallen.[93] Malaysia was also the world's third-largest exporter of LNG in 2010 after Qatar and Indonesia, holding 83 trillion cubic feet of proven reserves. But 42 percent of production currently goes for domestic consumption, and Malaysia's top four export customers (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China) all have deeper pockets and better maritime transportation infrastructure than India does.[94] Given the trendlines in production and consumption of oil and natural gas, Malaysian energy exports to India may trend *downward* in the years ahead. Indonesia has fairly significant reserves of oil (3.9 bbl of proven reserve) and gas (141 trillion cubic feet of proven reserve), but for a nation of 237 million, these resources are insufficient to meet domestic need. Indonesia has been a net importer of both crude oil and refined products since 2004, and suspended its Organization of Oil Producing Countries (OPEC) membership in January 2009 to concentrate on meeting demand at home.[95] Despite far larger gas reserves, a combination of protectionism, economic nationalism, and other foreign competitors likely impede Indonesia's potential to become a significant supplier of LNG to India.

Myanmar is perhaps the biggest question mark in the Southeast Asian energy equation. Some sources estimate Myanmar's oil reserves at 3.2 bbl, but other sources cite much lower figures.[96] Myanmar is currently a net importer of petroleum products, but because most of

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92 ONGC Videsh Ltd., "Assets: Vietnam," January 17, 2013b.

93 EIA, "Malaysia," September 3, 2013e.

94 EIA, 2003e.

95 EIA, 2013a.

96 The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) gives the figure of 50 million barrels in proved oil reserves. CIA, "Myanmar," *World Factbook*, January 2, 2013.

Myanmar's oil reserves are lightly or completely unexplored, some oil analysts believe that Myanmar has the potential to become a significant oil producer.[97] Recently, the country awarded ten onshore oil and gas blocks to eight companies in its biggest energy tenders in years. The blocks were awarded mostly to Asian companies, including Malaysia's Petronas, Thailand's PTT Exploration and Production, and Jubilant Energy, India.[98] The picture for natural gas is somewhat clearer: As of January 2012, Myanmar's proven reserves were estimated at 10 trillion cubic feet.[99] ONGC, together with the Indian natural gas processor and distributor GAIL Ltd., Daewoo of Korea, the Korean Gas Corporation, and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, are conducting extensive gas exploration and development in Myanmar. ONGC holds 17 percent of the stakes in Blocks A-1 and A-3 offshore from Rakhine state (in northwestern Myanmar near the border with Bangladesh).[100] Commercial quantities of natural gas have been discovered in two fields in Block A-1, with reserves estimated at 3.38 trillion cubic feet, and in Block A-3, with reserves estimated at 1.52 trillion cubic feet. A combined field development plan for the gas fields approved by the consortium partners was expected to be commissioned by May 2013. ONGC's share of investment as of March 2012 was approximately $271 million.[101]

The Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas in the Modi administration is Dharmendra Pradhan. A BJP and RSS stalwart, Pradhan is a party-builder rather than a technocrat or a political heavyweight. The portfolio for civilian nuclear energy facilities, however, is being retained by the prime minister himself.

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[97] Jeff Opdyke, "Oil Companies from Around the World Want Access to Myanmar but I've Already Found the Way In . . ." *Sovereign Investor*, June 25, 2012.

[98] "Myanmar Awards Onshore Oil and Gas Blocks—Biggest Energy Tender in Years," *Myanmar Times*, January 9, 2012.

[99] EIA, "Burma (Myanmar)," March 27, 2013d.

[100] Long-term prospects for development of these resources will be affected by the security in Rakhine State: Religious and ethnic violence flared up in 2012 in Rakhine, and could be a factor in future economic projections.

[101] ONGC Videsh Ltd., "Assets: Myanmar," January 17, 2013a.

Institutions

Much of India's diplomatic engagement with Southeast Asia has been focused on attempts to join regional institutions: "Our strategy is to make as many friends as possible and join as many organizations as possible," said one policymaker.[102] India is a "dialogue partner" for ASEAN. It currently holds a 5.35 percent stake in the Asian Development Bank (barely behind China, which holds 5.45 percent).[103] It is pressing to join the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization.

What does India hope to gain by joining these institutions? In one view, India is playing the long game: It ultimately is looking for a permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council, as well as regional and global acknowledgement of its status as a major power. Constant diplomatic engagement, both on a bilateral and multilateral basis, is a possible pathway to achieving these goals. In another view, India is joining merely for the sake of joining—without a clear strategy as to what these institutions might enable the country to *do*. A retired Indian diplomat admitted that there was not much of a game plan involved in the club-joining. "We have very intense bilateral relations," he said, "but we don't have a comprehensive strategy."[104] A retired military officer agreed: Bilateral engagement is more useful than multilateral, "since the ASEANs can't agree on a common stance toward China—or on much of anything."[105] As one source outside Indian government put it, "Delhi wants a seat at every possible table. What happens at the table is of less importance."[106]

Southeast Asia's security architecture comprises a system of overlapping institutions centered on ASEAN. This system has been evolv-

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[102] Interview with former senior Indian security official.

[103] According to one academic source in Singapore, Delhi is not increasing its Asian Development Bank involvement, despite increased ties between India and Japan (the bank's leading stakeholder). Interview with scholar of South Asia, 2013.

[104] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[105] Interview with retired Indian Navy flag officer and MoD official, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

[106] Interview with senior scholar of South and Southeast Asia, 2013.

ing since the 1990s and consists of the ASEAN Regional Forum and Post-Ministerial Conference the East Asia Summit; dialogue mechanisms with ASEAN partners;[107] the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and associated meetings, including ADMM+8; Track 1.5 meetings, the most prominent of which is the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore; and the Track 2 process, led by nongovernmental organizations, such as the annual Institute of Strategic and International Studies' Malaysia-led Asia-Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur. India is an active participant in all of the ASEAN partnership mechanisms.[108]

Ten ASEAN-India Summits have been held since 2002, in addition to the Commemorative Summit held in New Delhi in December 2012 to mark the 20th anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue and the tenth anniversary of the summit-level partnership. It elevated the ASEAN-India Partnership to the rank of a "strategic partnership."[109] India and ASEAN hold regular ministerial and senior officials' meetings, including meetings in the context of the Post-Ministerial Conferences between ASEAN and Dialogue Partners held at the annual ASEAN summits between ASEAN foreign ministers and each of the ten Dialogue Partners. The conferences review the relationship between ASEAN and the individual partners over the preceding years and sets goals to promote cooperation in the future.

The concept of an annual East Asia Summit developed as an evolution of the ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and South Korea) mechanism, which had been operating since 1998. India was subsequently allowed to participate, along with Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Russia.[110] For India, the invitation to join the East Asia Summit

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[107] In addition to India, these dialogue partners include Australia, Canada, China, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia, the United States, and the UN Development Program.

[108] Track 1 refers to meetings between government officials; Track 2 to meetings between people with no official ties to government. Track 1.5 includes all meetings somewhere in between—informal meetings, meetings with both official and nonofficial participants, etc.

[109] ASEAN, 2012b; ASEAN, "ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group (AIEPG) September 16–17, 2012, Kochi, India," September 18, 2012a.

[110] G. V. C. Naidu, "India and the East Asia Summit," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 29, No. 4, October 2005. The United States and Russia (at the Secretary of State/Foreign Minister level) attended the Fifth Summit in 2010 as "guests."

was a recognition of its growing economic and political influence: India was not involved in the deliberations that led to the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). China and Malaysia had not been enthusiastic about including India in the East Asia Summit, but had relented under pressure from Japan, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Singapore.[111]

The ARF is the primary forum for security dialogue in Asia and is led by regional foreign affairs leaders. It consists of 27 members: the ten ASEAN countries, the ten Dialogue partners (including India), plus Papua New Guinea, North Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Timor Leste, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The ARF operates by consensus and aims to promote confidence-building among its members, develop preventive diplomacy, and provide coordinated disaster relief.[112] India became a sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1992 and was upgraded to a full Dialogue Partner in 1996. Since 2002, India has participated in the annual ASEAN Summits, has co-chaired various ARF sessions, and has been a participant in the Shangri-La Dialogue at the ministerial level since the Dialogue's inception. In an interview, Kishore Mahbubani, formerly Singapore's ambassador to the United Nations, cited India's joining the ARF as the point at which its engagement with Southeast Asia moved from aspiration to reality.[113]

ASEAN has also developed an array of mechanisms in the defense and security sector and the corresponding partnership arrangements. The annual ADMM, established in 2006, is the highest defense mechanism within ASEAN.[114] The inaugural ADMM Plus was held in Hanoi in October 2010. From India's perspective, the ADMM

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[111] Naidu, 2005.

[112] ASEAN, "ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)," undated-d. For discussion of India's integration in the ARF, see Saint-Mezard, 2006, pp. 358–359.

[113] Interview with Kishore Mahbubani, Singapore, January 18, 2013.

[114] India does not participate in this session, but does participate in the biennial ADMM Plus meetings: These meetings of ASEAN with the eight Dialogue Partners (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States) are generally held in tandem with the ADMM and constitute the defense counterpart to the ARF, which is a foreign ministry-dominated forum.

Plus offers a vehicle to enhance its role as a stakeholder in the regional security architecture and, in particular, to reinforce its engagement in the maritime domain.[115] Within the ADMM Plus, India's priority is to promote cooperative approaches to ensure the security of sea lines of communication in the Asia-Pacific region. At the 2010 meeting in Hanoi, Defense Minister A. K. Anthony reported that India was participating in two projects with countries bordering on the Malacca Strait to improve the safety of navigation.[116] According to an analysis published by the United Service Institution of India, a national security and defense think tank with close links to the Indian military, the ADMM Plus is a useful mechanism to address nontraditional security threats and bring India closer to ASEAN, although the inclusion of so many stakeholders with conflicting security agendas complicates the tasks that the ADMM Plus is expected to carry out.[117]

India engagement with ASEAN on counterterrorism and transnational crime takes place in different venues, depending on the agencies involved. The Foreign Ministry track is the ARF—particularly the Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Trans-National Crime. India and Indonesia cochaired the sixth such meeting in Semarang, Indonesia, in February 2008, and India has organized seminars, workshops and training programs under ARF auspices. At the Interior/Home Affairs Ministry level, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Trans-National Crime brings together the respective ministers responsible for combating transnational crime together with the ASEAN Chiefs of National Police.[118] India is not included in this consultation mechanism.

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[115] Vijay Sakhuja, "View Point—ADMM: Enhancing Asia Pacific Security," Indian Council of World Affairs, June 20, 2010.

[116] "India Asks ADMM Plus for Cooperation to Secure Sea-Lanes," *OneIndia News*, October 12, 2010.

[117] Tuhin Subhro Chakraborty, "The Initiation & Outlook of ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus Eight," The United Service Institution of India, 2010.

[118] ASEAN, "ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC)," undated-c; Ralf Emmers, "The Fight Against Terrorism: What Role for ASEAN?" Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, RSIS Commentary No. 120, November 14, 2007.

Security Cooperation

For Indian planners, security is certainly important—but it is not the first item on the priority list. This helps explain the pace, far slower than might be desired by the United States or ASEAN, at which India approaches security cooperation with Southeast Asia.

India's primary security goal for the decade of 2004–2014, as articulated by Prime Minister Singh, was to provide the stability necessary for the nation to focus internally, and create a "decade of development." Barring external provocation, this goal is likely to be the focus for Prime Minister Modi as well: During the election campaign, Modi spoke of security and defense in very general terms, while directing most of his attention to economic issues. There is broad-based support in policymaking circles for prioritization of domestic over security concerns.[119] According to the influential Indian strategists advocating the "Nonalignment 2.0" strategy, "Under no circumstances should India jeopardize its own domestic economic growth, its social inclusion, and its political democracy. Its approach to the outside world must be to secure the maximum space possible for its own economic growth."[120]

The paramount decisionmakers in the Indian security establishment are the Ministry of Defense, and particularly the Prime Minister's Office—both of which are staffed largely by civilian bureaucrats whose decisions tend to be opaque, sensitive to political pressure, and exceptionally risk-averse.[121] Even under a sympathetic prime minister, defense spending will have to compete against a wide range of politically potent domestic constituencies. "Although India's defense spend-

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[119] For discussion of why Prime Minister Modi is likely to continue Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's prioritization of economic development over defense spending, see Jonah Blank, "A Milder Modi? What to Expect in a BJP-Led India," *Foreign Affairs*, May 16, 2014.

[120] Khilnani et al., 2012, p. 7. The authors of this influential document further note: "These strategists believe that "The window of opportunity for India becoming a prosperous nation is relatively small: The basic structures and dynamics necessary to achieve this prosperity will have to be put in place in the next ten to 15 years. The underlying factors that are propitious for our growth may not last very long."

[121] To understand India's national security decisionmaking process, see Bibhu Prasad Routray, *National Security Decision-Making in India*, Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, RSIS Monograph No. 27, 2013.

ing only accounts for 2.3 percent of GDP, the defense budget could face pressure from demands for increased social spending—particularly in light of the present global economic recession," one scholar notes.[122] Military budgets will be expanding only slowly, if at all. Policymakers will be wary of making commitments. Every joint exercise, ship visit, and arms sale will be faced with the question, "Is this absolutely vital to the nation's safety?"

From Delhi's standpoint, India has little need to acquire a military presence in Southeast Asia because it already has one: its bases on the sovereign India territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (see Figure 3.2). "In security terms, we are already in Southeast Asia," said a member of the India-ASEAN-Track II group. "The Andaman/Nicobar Tri-Services basing is fairly robust already, and when INS [Indian Naval Service] base Hawk becomes operational for air capacity, it will be one of the largest in the region."[123] Retired Indian air force, army, and navy flag officers all expressed the same sentiment: "The Tri-Services base is all we need," said a retired army brigadier.[124] "In a war, it's much better to have our first line of defense there than on the homeland," said a retired IAF flag officer.[125]

Indeed, Indian strategists see Southeast Asian nations as eager for more Indian security involvement in the region than India itself is ready to provide. "Every single Southeast Asian country wants to

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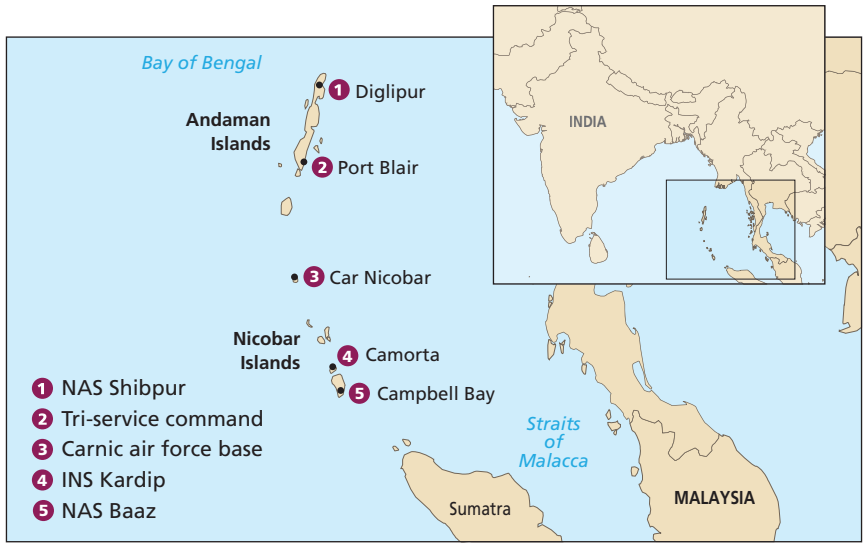
[122]Walter C. Ladwig III, "Delhi's Pacific Ambition: Naval Power, 'Look East,' and India's Emerging Influence in the Asia-Pacific," *Asian Security*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2009, p. 104.

[123]Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013. The same point was made in another interview. Interview with retired Indian diplomat who served as chief of mission in mainland Southeast Asia, Singapore, January 17, 2013.

[124]Interview with retired Indian Army brigadier, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

[125]Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013. Another retired IAF flag officer summed up India's long-term security infrastructure requirements in Southeast Asia as "More Andaman/Nicobar bases, hugely strengthened." (Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.) Few Indian planners appear to give much thought to the definitional question of whether the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are truly part of South Asia or Southeast Asia. They are aware that the indigenous population has virtually no ethnic or historical linkage to those on the mainland, and they know that the islands are closer to five Southeast Asian nations than they are to the mainland, but these facts do not appear to be regarded as definitional issues.

Figure 3.2
Andaman and Nicobar Island Bases



RAND *RR1021-3.2*

conduct exercises with us," said another IAF flag officer.[126] "Everyone wants to engage with India," said an analyst of the Indian military. "The problem is India's capacity."[127] The rationale for this interest is simple: "From ASEAN's perspective, it's good to have a counterweight to China," said the Track II participant. "If there's one thing these guys [i.e., ASEAN nations] are allergic to, it's a great power free-for-all."[128]

India's ambivalence about military involvement in the region has led to a vacuum of serious strategic planning for security engagement

[126]Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. A retired army officer noted "tremendous" cooperation with Southeast Asian militaries. Interview with retired Indian Army brigadier, 2013.

[127]Interview with analyst of Indian military strategy, Singapore, January 18, 2013.

[128]Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013. A retired army brigadier noted, "Southeast Asia wants us to counterbalance China, so that there isn't a single outside player dominating the region." Interview with retired Indian Army officer and defense analyst, 2013.

with Southeast Asia. An Indian Track II participant said India "absolutely has not defined" what its own security involvement in Southeast Asia might be.[129] A retired Indian military commander—one very knowledgeable about the current government's strategic planning—also said India has not developed a long-term security strategy for Southeast Asia. "If we had," he said, "we'd have first shaped a strategy for the Indian Ocean Region. We would have invested in Sri Lanka and the Maldives."[130] A retired, and relatively hawkish, army brigadier noted that India is much more comfortable with diplomatic engagement than security cooperation: "We don't like to take on new security challenges, so we don't plan for them," he said.[131]

With this as a backdrop, India's fairly limited security goals and modestly expanding security engagement in Southeast Asia become easier to understand.

India has been gradually building defense and security relationships with a number of Southeast Asian nations since the 1990s, but does not have the capacity to project military power far from its home waters.[132] Over the past decade, India has expanded its naval presence into the South China Sea and exercised with Southeast Asian navies, particularly Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines (see Table 3.1). Both India and some of the ASEAN states believe that India should play a greater diplomatic and security role in the region, including a larger naval presence.[133] However, the sense among some members of ASEAN is that much needs to be

[129] Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013.

[130] Interview with retired Indian Navy flag officer and MoD official, 2013.

[131] Interview with retired Indian Army officer and defense analyst, 2013.

[132] The Indian navy began making port calls in Malaysia in 1990, and in Indonesia in 1991. In 1993, India conducted a weeklong exercise with Singapore. Interview with scholar of South Asia, 2013.

[133] Kanti Bajpai, "Indian Strategic Culture," in Michael R. Chambers, ed., *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002, pp. 245–303.

Table 3.1
Indian and Chinese Exercises with ASEAN Nations (2012)

Nation	India	China
Singapore	6: MILAN, RIMPAC, Bold Kurukshetra, Agni Warrior, Joint Military Training, SIMBEX	0
Indonesia	4: MILAN, RIMPAC, Garuda Shakti, IND-INDO CORPAT	1: Sharp Knife
Thailand	4: MILAN, RIMPAC, Indo-Thai CORPAT, Indo-Thai Exercise Maitree	1: Blue Assault
Malaysia	3: MILAN, RIMPAC, Harimau Shakti	0
Philippines	2: MILAN, RIMPAC	0
Brunei	1: MILAN	0
Myanmar	1: MILAN	0
Cambodia	0	0
Vietnam	0	1: Unnamed maritime search and rescue

SOURCES: Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013*, Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2013, p. 73; Vivek Raghuvanshi, "1st India-Malaysian Exercise Ends This Week," *Defense News*, October 22, 2012; "Vietnam Not Part of India's Joint Military Exercises: Ministry," *Thanh Nien News*, February 4, 2012; "India, Singapore Navies Complete SIMBEX 2012," Naval-technology.com, April 2, 2012; "14 Countries to Join India in Naval Exercise," *Economic Times*, January 30, 2012; "India, Singapore Conduct Exercise Bold Kurukshetra 2012," *Army Technology*, March 26, 2012; "Singapore and India Conduct Joint Military Training Exercise," *Straits Times*, November 29, 2012; Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto, "India-Indonesia Defence Cooperation: Back on Track?" Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, RSIS Commentary No. 103, May 29, 2013; Indian Navy, "Indo-Thai Naval 14th Biennial Exercise 'CORPAT' Completed at Port Blair," press release, April 24, 2012; Government of India, *Ministry of External Affairs Annual Report 2012–2013*, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 16–26; Government of India, *Ministry of Defence Annual Report 2012–2013*, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 193–202.

NOTE: Multilateral exercises are listed first. Chart does not capture smaller-scale defense cooperation and exchanges such as joint patrols or demining training.

done to ramp up military engagement between India and the ASEAN countries.[134]

India's engagement takes the form of bilateral and multilateral exercises, naval deployments and port calls, bilateral defense cooperation agreements, training and military assistance to Southeast Asian militaries, and cooperative mechanisms to respond to nontraditional threats.

Beginning in 1995, the Indian Navy has hosted a biennial exercise called MILAN at the Andaman Island base of Port Blair.[135] The event has grown from five participants in the inaugural exercise to 15 in 2012, when India hosted Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Mauritius, New Zealand, the Philippines, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. MILAN 2012 enhanced the participating navies' interoperability and standard operating procedures, and included a seminar on capacity-building through mutual cooperation.[136]

MILAN is moving from a confidence-building measure into a forum for the promotion of interoperability. It is an important mechanism to deal with a variety of nontraditional security challenges in the region, such as maritime terrorism, piracy, humanitarian assistance, search and rescue operations, and protection of the sea lines near the Malacca Strait.[137]

The Indian Navy has staged a series of deployments to Southeast Asian waters, including the South China Sea, for over a decade.[138] In

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[134]Goh Sui Noi, "Asean Eyes India as 'Soft Balancer,'" *Straits Times*, March 11, 2013.

[135]"Milan" is the Hindi word for "meeting" or "coming together." For details on MILAN, see "India Stages MILAN 2012 Naval Exercise," *Strategic Defense Intelligence*, February 13, 2012.

[136]"14 Countries to Join India in Naval Exercise," 2012.

[137]"East-East Relations: India-East Asia Security Cooperation," *Defence and Security of India (DSI)*, April 1, 2013.

[138]In addition to potential gas deposits in the area, the South China Sea is a transit point for a great deal of India's maritime trade. According to a former Indian ambassador to a nation near the area, 60 percent of India's eastward shipping passes through the South China Sea. Interview with retired Indian diplomat who served as chief of mission in mainland Southeast Asia, Singapore, 2013.

2004, India deployed a six-ship flotilla (two Kashin class destroyers, INS Ranjit and Ranvijay; the frigate Godavari; the missile corvette Kirch; the offshore patrol vessel Sukanya; and the fleet tanker Jyoti) to the South China Sea. India's naval deployments into the South China Sea are assisted by friendly facilities available in Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The operational deployment of the Eastern Fleet in March-May 2011 involved port calls at Singapore, Subic Bay (Philippines), Vladivostok (Russia), Manila (Philippines), Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei), Kota Kina Balu (Malaysia), and Jakarta (Indonesia).[139] In May 2013, a four-ship flotilla deployed to the South China Sea with port calls at Port Klang (Malaysia), Da Nang (Vietnam), and Manila.[140] India also participates in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), a biennial multilateral exercise hosted by the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Both India and China tend to play down their competition, particularly in government pronouncements as opposed to media headlines; while Indian officials are concerned about Beijing's reaction, their Chinese counterparts have little reason to stoke a peer-rivalry with a nation they do not consider a geopolitical equal. Indian Prime Minister Singh and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stated during the latter's visit to India in 2010 that India and China were not in competition. The joint communiqué drawn up by the two countries asserted that "there is enough space in the world for the development of both India and China," and that they have "common interests and similar concerns on major regional and international issues."[141] Nevertheless, since 2010, China has shown increased assertiveness regarding its South China Sea claims, particularly compared with its "charm offensive" of the early

[139] David Scott, "India's Role in the South China Sea: Geopolitics and Geoeconomics in Play," *India Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2013, pp. 57–58; Indian Navy, "Operational Deployment of Eastern Fleet 2011," updated February 7, 2014.

[140] Ajay Banerjee, "Indian Warships on Way to Disputed South China Sea," *The Tribune* (India), March 28, 2013.

[141] Scott, 2013, p. 52.

2000s.[142] India's efforts to exercise freedom of navigation in the South China Sea have drawn challenges from the Chinese. In June 2012, the Indian naval squadron, led by INS Shivalik on its way to South Korea from the Philippines, was joined by a Chinese frigate that "sent a message 'welcoming' the contingent to the South China Sea and sailed along for the next 12 hours."[143]

India has entered into bilateral defense cooperation agreements with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, and the Philippines. India has also been actively involved in assisting the armed forces of Myanmar and Thailand. India has made its facilities available for training and exercises of Singapore air force, army, and naval personnel.[144]

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief

One of the most likely strategic choices for increased Indian engagement with Southeast Asia, and for increased Indo-U.S. cooperation in the region, lies in HA/DR. As an Indian diplomat who served in one of the affected nations during the 2004 tsunami said, "This should be a no-brainer." He noted that HA/DR coordination was not merely a possibility, but "a necessity," and suggested HA/DR cooperation on logistics, replenishment, and joint exercises in the Andaman and Nicobar Island bases and Diego Garcia; each of these options is feasible, he said—but each would be a political decision, not a military or bureaucratic one.[145] Increased Indian cooperation with Southeast Asian nations in HA/DR could advance the interests not only of the countries participating, but also of all others (including the United States) potentially

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[142] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold note that China's posture has alienated several Southeast Asian nations, but has also exposed rifts in these states' rival claims and strategies; while China's hand is strengthened by its economic and diplomatic advantages, the aggressiveness of Beijing's stance presents opportunities for out-of-area rivals. Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, pp. 6–7.

[143] C. Raja Mohan and Raja Mandala, "Indian Navy in South China Sea: Beijing's Unwelcome Escort," *Indian Express*, August 14, 2013.

[144] Asif Ahmed, "India-ASEAN Relations in 21st Century: Strategic Implications for India—Analysis," *Eurasia Review*, July 9, 2012; Vinay Kumar, "India, Singapore Sign New Pact on Army Training," *The Hindu*, June 5, 2013.

[145] Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013.

affected by or participating in future disaster relief operations. For example, regional HA/DR efforts would be facilitated by an Indian-Singapore information-sharing regime, or by accelerating India's existing program of upgrading and maintaining Vietnam's various Russian-build utility helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and naval vessels.

HA/DR in general represents a use of military resources that rests well within India's comfort zone.[146] One retired Indian pilot fondly recalls a rescue mission in 1977, when the IAF performed a dangerous helicopter medical evacuation of renowned mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary, who was stricken by altitude sickness on the Himalayan peak of Akash Parbat.[147] Indian policymakers are highly averse to sending troops overseas for any action that could be seen as aggression, and often proudly claim that India has never invaded another nation.[148] While some might take issue with this characterization, it is a view strongly held by politicians and citizens alike. Peacekeeping, on the other hand, is regarded as deploying troops to save lives rather than take them.[149] The great pride India takes in its peacekeeping operations

[146] Some Indian theorists caution that HA/DR could detract from the Indian military's core missions, both through training unrelated to warfighting and by increased wear and tear on equipment. See O. S. Dagur, "Armed Forces in Disaster Management: A Perspective on Functional Aspects of Role, Training and Equipment," New Delhi: Centre for Land Warfare Studies, Manekshaw Paper No. 4, 2008.

[147] Interview with retired IAF air commodore, 2013. Details of mission: Rahul Chandrawarkar, "Sir Edmund Hillary's 'Ocean to the Sky' to Come Alive Again," *Sakal Times*, March 1, 2013.

[148] This claim is highly debatable: India's military actions in Goa in 1961 (then a Portuguese territory), East Pakistan in 1971 (at the creation of Bangladesh as an independent state), and Sikkim in 1973–1975 (at that time, nominally independent) are three potential counterexamples. India's military involvement in Sri Lanka from 1987–1989 (which began as a peacekeeping operation, but became increasingly kinetic), and repeated line of control (LOC)/line of actual control (LAC) skirmishes with Pakistan and China, are additional examples of Indian military engagement beyond its borders.

[149] Some nations are peacekeepers out of financial necessity, but India is a peacekeeper out of national sentiment. India has traditionally been one of the top contributors to U.N. peacekeeping missions, ranking only slightly behind Pakistan and Bangladesh since 2005; in the half decade before that, India was almost always one of the top four contributors. As of June 30, 2013 (the most recent date for which figures are available), India had 7,878 troops deployed on UN peacekeeping missions. Only two nations had more: Bangladesh (7,986),

may strengthen the appeal of HA/DR by association: In the area of Southeast Asia particularly, HA/DR represents a politically safe form of security operation.

During the Asian tsunami of 2004, after decades of receiving disaster and humanitarian assistance from other countries, India became a net provider of HA/DR. India responded with its largest ever relief operation by sending nearly 20,000 troops, 40 naval vessels, 35 fixed-wing aircraft, 42 helicopters, and medical teams with relief supplies to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.[150] Indian policymakers and public alike take great pride in this fact. A retired Indian military officer boasted, in a statement that might be disputed by other parties, that the IAF and Indian navy brought the first international aid deliveries to the Indonesian province of Aceh.[151] India's assistance to nearby Sri Lanka was a powerful political statement, particularly in light of the sometimes-troubled relationship between the two nations following India's 1987 intervention in Sri Lanka's civil war.

The political rewards for India's tsunami response were sufficient to convince many policymakers of the benefits of a robust HA/DR capability.[152] According to an influential retired naval flag officer, the tsunami response greatly increased the standing of the Indian navy in particular, and the military more broadly, throughout the region: He sees an agreement for routine refueling and refitting of Indian vessels in six ASEAN nations as a direct result. This officer noted that India's comparative advantage in regional HA/DR, particularly vis-à-vis wealthier nations, was its speed of response. A corollary benefit of particular interest to

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and Pakistan (8,230). See United Nations, "Ranking of Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations," January 31, 2013. For 2002–2012, see United Nations, "Troop and Police Contributors Archive (1990–2013)," undated.

[150] IDSA Task Force, *Net Security Provider: India's Out-of-Area Contingency Operations*, New Delhi, 2012, p. 37. A slightly different listing of resources (16,000 troops, 32 ships, 41 aircraft) is provided by Heide Haruyo Gentner, "ASEAN: Cooperative Disaster Relief After the Tsunami," *Südostasien aktuell*, April 2005.

[151] Interview with retired IAF air commodore, 2013.

[152] For a recent argument against the persistence of political goodwill stemming from HA/DR assistance, see Richard Samuels, *3/11: Disaster and Change in Japan*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013.

the United States is the remarkable cost-effectiveness of India's HA/DR operations: According to this officer (who was singled out by two currently serving Indian policymakers as the best source for information on the topic),[153] India's entire HA/DR response during the Asian tsunami cost about $10 million—at most 4 percent, and quite possibly as little as 1 percent, of the cost of the U.S. military's much larger HA/DR effort in the same disaster response.[154]

One source of likely frustration for the United States or Southeast Asian nations in seeking to partner with India on HA/DR is that the Indian government does not have a structured mechanism for government action in a disaster. "You are masters at the art of strategizing," said one retired Indian military officer, "we are the masters at the art of *ad-hoc*'ing."[155] After the 2004 tsunami, the government set up the

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[153] Interview with retired Indian Navy flag officer and MoD official, 2013. Current policymakers: Identifying descriptions and dates of interview withheld at request of interviewees. The source acknowledged that there was no definitive figure available anywhere in Indian government, and that $10 million represented a best estimate. One published source places the identifiable costs (primarily grants) at a little over half this amount: $2 million to Indonesia, $2.2 million to Sri Lanka, and $1.1 million to Maldives, for a total of $5.3 million. Claudia Meier and C. S. R. Murthy, *India's Growing Involvement in Humanitarian Assistance*, Berlin: Global Public Policy Institute, March 2011, pp. 16–20.

[154] Because of the number of variables in the equation, there is no clear way of determining the cost of the U.S. response—for example, whether the cost would include all expenses associated with the naval vessels and personnel while they were given the mission of HA/DR or if most of these would be excluded since the service members, vessels, and aircraft would have been deployed somewhere regardless. Reports at the time placed the cost of deployment of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* and other vessels, along with their personnel and aircraft, at $1 billion—of which figure India's response (if roughly calculated at $10 million) represents 1 percent. The more conservative 4 percent is based on a more limited estimate of $225.6 million net cost to the U.S. military (out of a total USG contribution of $857 million). (Karl F. Inderfurth, David Fabrycky, and Stephen P. Cohen, "The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami: Six Month Report," The Sigur Center Asia Papers, Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, 2005, p. 13.) By way of context, even the highest-end $1 billion estimate would mean that the entire U.S. HA/DR effort cost approximately the same amount as three days of military operations in Afghanistan in 2013.

[155] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. This lack of a unified doctrine is not limited to HA/DR: The Indian navy, air force, and army each has its own individual war doctrine, and India lacks a coherent maritime strategy. Pravin Sawhney, "Dragon Moves: With Growing Chinese Belligerence, India Should Reassess Its Relations with the U.S.," *Force Online*, December 2012.

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), but this move did not establish a clear chain of command, let alone place operational control in the hands of the Indian military;[156] indeed, the NDMA is a civilian agency, and its nominal control of the HA/DR process presents a complication to closer military-to-military cooperation on HA/DR scenarios. According to every source interviewed, there is no set playbook determining India's HA/DR responses, nothing comparable to the role played in the USG by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Disaster Assistance Response Team. The retired Indian officer continued: "We will commit ourselves to *nothing* in advance—on HA/DR, or anything else. Everything is decided on a case-by-case basis: What is our interest in the country in question? What interest might the U.S. or China have? Are we aligned? Even in disasters, we are masters of *realpolitik*."[157]

As a practical matter, this means that every HA/DR event—whether an actual disaster or merely a proposed joint exercise—is treated as a unique circumstance. In each case, authority for the military part of the operation rests with the MoD: There is no counterpart, for example, to a PACOM commander, with wide powers to approve the deployment of resources in the applicable theater of operation.[158] To the extent that the uniformed military are given authority, command does not necessarily fall to the service most likely to provide the resources. As one retired IAF officer noted, in all military matters the army "tends to rule the roost."[159]

But there is a flip side to this picture. Lack of a formal doctrine can, in the right circumstances, lead to excellent spur-of-the-moment improvisation. "Because we're *ad hoc*," said the retired officer cited above, "we can be very nimble when we have to be."[160] The naval officer

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[156] Interview with retired IAF air commodore, 2013.

[157] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

[158] Interview with former senior Indian security official.

[159] Interview with retired IAF air commodore, 2013. For a schematic diagram of how the process works in theory—although not necessarily in practice—see Meier and Murthy, 2011, p. 10.

[160] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

cited above remarked on the tsunami as an instance in which the heavy hand of the MoD paradoxically enabled a rapid response: Because the disaster hit on Boxing Day (the day after Christmas—a national holiday in India), the civilian bureaucrats at the Ministry were almost all out of the office: The response, he said, was orchestrated by one bold civilian and a cadre of gung-ho sailors and airmen.[161] Indeed, the tsunami is a prime example of opportunities taken, and not taken—in the aftermath of the disaster, the United States and India agreed to work more closely on HA/DR—but the agreement did not lead to a mechanism or enduring structure for cooperation.[162]

Balancer for, Not Bulwark Against, China

Chinese strategy in Southeast Asia is driven by complex, intersecting, and often contradictory interests in the region.[163] As a constituent part of China's periphery, Chinese leaders consider stability in Southeast Asia as critical to their nation's economic and security interests. Stable and positive political relations are viewed as conducive to the further development of economic ties. And because of the various bilateral alliances and partnerships that tie particular countries in the region to the United States, Beijing also regards relations with regional states as a means of preventing further U.S. "encirclement" of China. Given these considerations, China devotes considerable diplomatic attention, including military diplomacy, to its regional relationships.

At the same time, however, China disputes maritime features and Exclusive Economic Zone boundaries with a number of regional states, and these disputes have led to increasingly contentious relations with several nations in recent years. Given the rise of China's relative power over the last two decades, China sees history and time on its side. It has developed civilian and military capabilities to show that it effectively controls contested areas, and has taken actions such as conduct-

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[161] Interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013. The civilian he cited was J. N. Dixit.

[162] U.S. Department of State, "U.S.-India Disaster Relief Initiative Fact Sheet," July 18, 2005.

[163] See Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013.

ing fisheries patrols through such waters as a means to highlighting its claims. Beijing backs this effort with the coercive use of military force on occasion, such as when it believes other states may challenge Chinese claims by conducting surveys or resource exploitation in contested areas. These activities have, in a number of cases, compromised Beijing's efforts to develop closer regional relations. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the states of Southeast Asia have diverse interests, and Chinese diplomacy has greater traction in some states than it does in others.

Despite the wishes of some American observers who would like to construct an Indo-U.S. alliance against China, such plans have little traction in New Delhi. Indian policymakers, both Congress and BJP, share an aversion to anything that smacks of a permanent "alliance" with a superpower: India would inevitably be the junior partner in such an arrangement, a concept anathema to leaders and citizens alike. For that reason, when a politician in either nation speaks of India and the United States as being "natural allies," there is often an immediate counterreaction. This response doesn't indicate a dislike or distrust of America, merely the continuing legacy of nonalignment.[164] It is perhaps noteworthy that Prime Minister Modi, within days being sworn in, assured Chinese premier Li Keqiant of his intent to "utilise the full potential of our strategic and cooperative partnership with China."[165]

On the "balance" side of the equation, all sources interviewed saw India as having an important role to play as a counterweight to China's potential dominance in Southeast Asia. India may expand its niche role as a supplier and maintainer of Russian or Soviet-model

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[164] This reaction persists despite the use of precisely this formulation by Prime Minister Vajpayee in 2000: Vajpayee, 2000. For a discussion of the delicate balance between India's desired role as a balancer but not a bulwark against China and an articulation of the need for Washington to avoid talk of a U.S.-India "alliance" against China, see Latif, 2012. For more general brief overview, see also Robert D. Kaplan, "The India-China Rivalry," *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, April 25, 2012. For a comparison between context of early 2000s and present day, see Daniel Twining, "Was the U.S.-India Relationship Oversold?" *Foreign Policy*, April 26, 2012.

[165] "China a Priority in India's Foreign Policy: PM Narendra Modi Tells Chinese Premier Li Kegiang," NDTV.com, May 29, 2014.

military hardware, but is unlikely to challenge China in the security (let alone economic) sphere. "There is a competition with China for regional influence," said a former top advisor to an Indian prime minister, "and China is way ahead of us."[166] He noted that China's diaspora communities in Southeast Asia are significantly larger, wealthier, and more politically potent than their Indian counterparts. But the contest for influence, he argued, has been going on for many centuries. "What was mainland Southeast Asia called until recently? *Indo . . . China*!"[167]

There is widespread concern in India's policymaking circles of China's advances throughout the Indo-Pacific region. "We see China as a looming presence," said a retired diplomat. He noted that Beijing was reportedly trying to add naval facilities in the Maldives and Seychelles to the existing "String of Pearls," expanding its presence in Pakistan and Nepal, and even looking into opening an embassy in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan (whose foreign policy India strictly controls).[168]

Some observers see China's approaches to India's near-neighbors as more pressing than advances in Southeast Asia. "India's immediate neighborhood contains several weak countries that run the risk of becoming failed states," writes Walter C. Ladwig III, predicting that India will focus on its immediate neighborhood rather than greater power projection further afield.[169] While some Indian strategists (particularly the authors of *Nonalignment 2.0*) argue that "India cannot hope to arrive as a great power if it is unable to manage relationships within South Asia,"[170] other Indian strategists believe that "India, too,

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[166] Interview with former strategic advisor to an Indian prime minister, 2013.

[167] Interview with former strategic advisor to an Indian prime minister, 2013.

[168] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013. For a discussion of how China's advances in the region play into India's security relationships, see Bilveer Singh, *Southeast Asia-India Defence Relations in the Changing Regional Security Landscape,* New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, IDSA Monograph Series No. 4, May 2011.

[169] Ladwig, 2009, p. 104.

[170] Khilnani et al., 2012, p. 15.

like the United States, Great Britain, and Germany before it, can rise despite being situated in an unsettled neighborhood."[171]

To the extent that India is able to perform this balancing role in Southeast Asia, policymakers in Delhi see it as being warmly welcomed in the region. "When ASEAN gets nervous about China, they turn to India," said the former prime ministerial advisor. He noted that Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam all have stronger economic ties with China than they do with India—but all have stronger security ties with India than they do with China.[172] Some Indian policymakers see ASEAN's welcome as being perhaps too warm: One former top security official saw ASEAN as seeking a protector against China, but noted that, "We're not the *gendarme* of Southeast Asia."[173] As detailed in a recent RAND study, China's aggressive posture toward states with South China Sea claims such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia presents an opportunity for greater security engagement with external powers.[174] From the standpoint of some Southeast Asian observers, however, the perspective is somewhat different. A Singapore-based scholar described an encounter he'd had recently with visitors from an Indian military academy: "They compared the India-China contest to a football [i.e., soccer] game in which both sides are only playing defense. But we [Southeast Asians] aren't a spectator in that game—we're the playing field that gets stamped on!"[175]

Even those Indian policy-shapers who are most worried about China's rise remain still more worried about taking any action that might lead to conflict. "We don't want to gang up on China," said one policymaker.[176] "We want to embed China in the security net-

[171] Tellis, 2012, p. 25.

[172] Interview with former strategic advisor to an Indian prime minister, 2013.

[173] Interview with former senior Indian security official.

[174] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, pp. 6–7. The opportunity described in this study is presented as one for the United States, but the same analytical rationale would apply to India as well.

[175] Interview with senior scholar of Southeast Asia, 2013.

[176] Identifying description and date of interview withheld at request of interviewee.

work of the region," said another.[177] "If we don't respond [to U.S. overtures] with the alacrity you wish," said a retired IAF officer, "it is due to the elephant in the room."[178] A former official deeply involved in nuclear issues noted that Delhi has finally recognized the legitimacy of America's claim to be part of the Asia-Pacific security structure, but that India will remain cautious in engaging the United States out of concern about China's reaction.[179] A retired diplomat noted that there is a strong "China establishment" cadre within Delhi's foreign policy elite, and it is exceptionally eager to avoid confrontation: "They want to avoid another 1962."[180] A retired IAF flag officer made the same point, but in a softer way: "We aren't looking to make a point [i.e., by challenging China]. We have nothing to prove."[181]

Several Indian sources voiced a surprising reason for their reluctance to side with the United States in a hypothetical bulwark role to contain or balance against China: fear of *American* intentions.[182] U.S. observers who regard India as unduly hesitant about confronting China have their mirror image in Delhi: "The relationship between the U.S. and China is closer than India's relationship with either country," said the nuclear expert cited above. "Both nations have close ties to Pakistan, for example. India certainly can't assume the U.S. would be on our side against China in a conflict."[183] After the announcement in November 2013 of increased nuclear cooperation between Beijing and Islamabad, former Indian foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal expressed concerns about what he termed "a China-Pak nuclear axis

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[177] Identifying description and date of interview withheld at request of interviewee.

[178] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. He added that the MoD was particularly risk-averse about scheduling exercises with ASEAN nations, for fear of provoking China.

[179] Interview with former strategic advisor to an Indian prime minister, 2013.

[180] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[181] Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013.

[182] This sentiment is articulated by former Indian diplomat M. K. Bhadrakumar, "India Frets over Obama's Chinamania," *Asia Times Online*, March 14, 2009. See also discussion of India's reaction to a feared "G-2" in Elizabeth C. Economy and Adam Segal, "The G-2 Mirage," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 3, May-June 2009.

[183] Interview with former strategic advisor to an Indian prime minister, 2013.

against India"—and warned, "If the U.S. sacrifices India's interests to protect its China and Pakistan equities, the India-U.S. nuclear deal would look most invidious."[184]

The retired diplomat made a similar point: The United States, he said, has a long history of talking up the unbreakable bonds of democracy and rule of law that join America and India, and then cutting cynical deals to provide arms to military-dominated Pakistan; why should India assume that the United States would behave any differently *vis-à-vis* China? American talk of an economic "G-2" could easily lead to a U.S.-China strategic duopoly, and India would be foolish to go far out on a limb that America itself might well chop off.[185]

Instead of aligning with either the United States or China, some Indian policy-shapers advocate "soft balancing" with both countries. In the view of these advocates, competition between the two giants creates "strategic space" for India to maneuver for its interests by avoiding alignment with either side. This idea was articulated by senior Indian Foreign Service Officer Venu Rajamony in 2002, and subsequent advocates include retired diplomat Vinod Khanna.[186]

A Western ambassador who served in India reported a genuine concern among his interlocutors about the need to balance China—but he felt that India would try to do so in the diplomatic rather than the military arena.[187] Indian strategists appear to place extremely high stock in the potency of their diplomatic, cultural, and "soft power" policy instruments, but these tools may prove less effective than Delhi expects. As a Western official who has served in both ambassadorial and security roles noted, China's diplomatic corps "utterly dwarfs" that

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[184] Kanwal Sibal, "A China-Pak Nuclear Axis Against India," Vivekananda International Foundation, undated.

[185] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, New Delhi, April 8, 2013.

[186] Khanna, 2011, pp. 293–304; Venu Rajamony, "India-China-U.S. Triangle: A 'Soft' Balance of Power System in the Making," Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, unpublished paper. See also Deepa M. Ollapally, "India's Response to the U.S. Rebalance," in Robert G. Sutter et al., *Balancing Acts: The U.S. Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability*, Washington, D.C.: Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University, August 2013.

[187] Interview with retired senior Western diplomat, 2013.

of India.[188] The staff of the Ministry of External Affairs is about the same size as that of Singapore, a nation with less than one-half of 1 percent of India's population; China's diplomatic corps is eight times the size of India's.[189]

From India's standpoint, the threat posed by China is real—but only *potential*. Perhaps India's attitude is best summed up by a retired IAF flag officer: "We're taking out an insurance policy against a challenge that *might* arise. At present, there isn't one. But in the future, there might be."[190] A retired diplomat said much the same thing: "We don't know what China's intentions are. We want to be prepared."[191] In Delhi's ideal world, India would follow Theodore Roosevelt's admonition to "speak softly, but carry a big stick." But in an environment constrained by tight budgets and pressing domestic political demands, the stick cannot be particularly big—so the voice may be even more subdued.[192]

Goals in Action: How Do India's Goals Play Out in Specific Southeast Asian Nations?

In seeking to assess the degree to which India's goals in Southeast Asia are being translated into concrete action, it is useful to set them out in the form of a stoplight diagram (Figure 3.3), showing the level of India's engagement on each of the issues discussed above for each of the ten nations of ASEAN.

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[188] Interview with Western diplomat with prior service in Southeast Asia, Washington, D.C., February 27, 2013.

[189] "India as a Great Power," *The Economist*, March 30, 2013.

[190] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013; interview with retired Indian Army flag officer, 2013.

[191] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[192] Cohen and Dasgupta argue that India's economic growth will likely lag behind China for another generation. Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2010, p. 144. In 2012, India's economy grew around 5 percent, significantly lower than its peak 9.3 percent in 2010–2011. Even if economists who calculate India's 2013 growth rate at 6.1–6.7 percent are correct (see Behera, 2013), that would still put India at least a full percentage point behind the 7.7 percent estimated for China. John Mair, "China November Data Shows Economy on Tract for 2013 Target," Reuters, December 10, 2013.

Figure 3.3
Framework for Examining India's Engagement with Southeast Asia

Nation	Connectivity	Trade	Energy	Diplomacy, Institutions	Security Cooperation	HA/DR, Development	China Balancer
Singapore							
Vietnam							
Myanmar							
Thailand							
Malaysia							
Indonesia							
Philippines							
Brunei							
Cambodia							
Laos							

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The next chapter will examine each of these bilateral relationships in detail, adding calibrated shades of green, yellow and red to the chart. Taking India's relationship with Singapore as an example (Figure 3.4): India engages very actively in connectivity (air and sea), diplomatic institutions, and security cooperation, so these boxes are scored green; it engages actively but less successfully in trade, so this is scored light green; there is only limited engagement on HA/DR, and even less on energy, so these are scored light red (orange) and red respectively; engagement on balancing China's regional ambitions is scored yellow, indicating a moderate level of engagement.

Figure 3.4
Summary of India's Engagement with Singapore

Nation	Connectivity	Trade	Energy	Diplomacy, Institutions	Security Cooperation	HA/DR, Development	China Balancer
Singapore							

NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.

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CHAPTER FOUR

How Is India's Strategy Being Implemented in Southeast Asia?

At the rhetorical level, India's commitment to engagement with Southeast Asia is impressive. On the ground, however, intentions generally have not been translated into concrete reality. As one Southeast Asian ambassador put it, "There is no substance behind the rhetoric, and little prospect of substance materializing in the foreseeable future."[1] One of the recurring themes of this report is the disparity between India's strategic interests in Southeast Asia, and the nation's slow pace in pursuing these interests. From a "glass half-full" standpoint, India is more deeply engaged than at any time in its modern history, and the rate of involvement has been increasing by almost every metric since the announcement of the Look East policy in 1992. From a "glass half-empty" standpoint, however, the developments of the past two decades are only impressive when compared with the nearly static relationships of the Cold War era. In the view of many observers inside Southeast Asia itself, India is shuffling forward at a stately elephantine pace, with none of the speed or agility of an "Asian Tiger." While India prefers to focus on a narrative of "Look at how far we've come," many interlocutors in the region see the more important storyline as "Look at how far we have yet to go."

When Prime Minister Rao unveiled the Look East policy, Southeast Asian leaders warmly welcomed the development. Singapore's founding prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, encouraged ASEAN to admit India as a dialogue partner and described traditional Indian cultural

[1] Interview with from Southeast Asian ambassador, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2013.

values as akin to the Confucian values that he saw as the glue binding much of Asia together.[2] In 1996, at the keynote address to the seventh Southeast Asian Forum, Malaysia's foreign minister (and future prime minister) Abdullah Badawi suggested that India might be admitted as a full member of ASEAN "very soon."[3]

A quarter century (and five prime ministers) after the introduction of the Look East policy, India is no closer to membership in ASEAN. The Singapore-based scholar Long Shi Ruey Joey notes that while Delhi continues to seek a role in the region, "Its inward-looking policies, and the fixation with Kashmir and Pakistan . . . have circumscribed India's influence in Southeast Asia."[4] In interviews conducted for this report in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and Myanmar, the opinion of Southeast Asian sources was nearly universal: Indian engagement was welcomed, but viewed as disappointingly modest. This trend was widely seen as having become more pronounced in recent years (that is, during the second term of Prime Minister Singh, from 2009 to 2014), although the prevailing sentiment was that India had not decelerated so much as failed to accelerate at a pace appropriate to its stated goals.

Kishore Mahbubani, whose long tenure in Singapore's foreign service included a term as president of the UN Security Council, said, "India has been talking a good game, but hasn't actually followed through."[5] A scholar based in Southeast Asia admitted, "I don't see a clear Indian strategy, other than the amorphous seeking of a 'seat at the table.'"[6] An Asian diplomat based in Myanmar expressed disappoint-

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2 Encouraging ASEAN to accept India as dialogue partner: Saint-Mezard, 2006, pp. 221–222; Indian values as akin to Confucian values: Saint-Mezard, 2006, p. 272.

3 Abdullah Badawi, unpublished remarks at address delivered on March 5, 1996. Cited in Alice Ba, (*Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 127.

4 Long Shi Ruey Joey, "Great Power Politics and Southeast Asian Security," in Sumit Ganguly, Andrew Scobell, and Joseph Chinyong Liow, eds., *Handbook of Asian Security Studies*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 237.

5 Interview with Mahbubani, 2013.

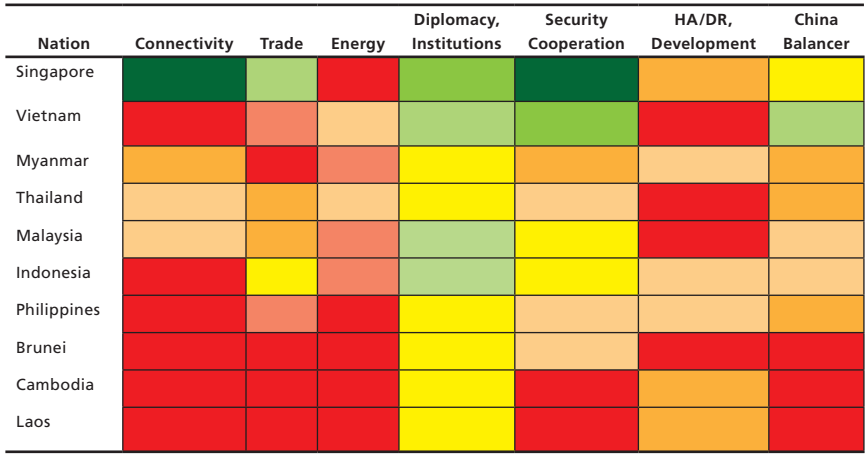
6 Interview with senior scholar of South and Southeast Asia, 2013.

ment in the scope of India's infrastructure development throughout the region: "It's nothing, compared with China."[7]

The gap between India's rhetoric and action on engagement with Southeast Asia can be seen in a country-by-country analysis (see Figure 4.1). This chapter examines India's bilateral relationships in the region to provide a more granular look at one of the report's main findings: While India seeks closer ties with Southeast Asia in all of the areas discussed in Chapter Three, progress in achieving this goal has proceeded only slowly.

The nations of Southeast Asia may be considered as falling into three tiers in their engagement with India. The first-tier nations are of primary importance, each for different reasons: Singapore is India's closest regional partner across a full security, economic, and political

Figure 4.1
India's Engagement with Southeast Asia at a Glance



NOTE: This chart portrays the analytical findings discussed in this report in a single image. It is the product of subjective rather than quantitative analysis: The intent is to illustrate graphically the analytical points made in the pages that follow, not to represent a statistical weighting that would, by its very nature, be arbitrary rather than mathematically objective.
Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.

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[7] Interview with Asian diplomatic source, Yangon, April 5, 2013.

spectrum; Vietnam is India's longest-standing security partner and the most significant example of India's niche role as a supplier of training and equipment for Soviet/Russian military hardware; Myanmar is the only nation in Southeast Asia to share a land border with India and is the focal point of India's ambitions for connectivity to the region by road, rail, and Indian-financed port facilities.

The second-tier nations, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, are those with which India enjoys positive and expanding economic and security relationships. The ordering of these three relationships on the basis of security ties is roughly the inverse of an ordering on economic ones: India has the most trade with Indonesia and the least with Thailand, but the reverse is true in military exchanges, exercises, and other security metrics; Malaysia is in the middle by both economic and security measurements.

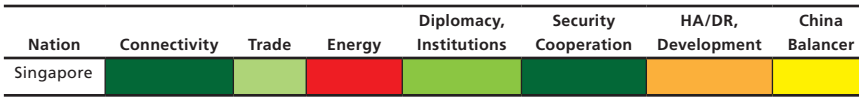
The third-tier nations, Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos, are those with which India has relatively modest engagement on all fronts. India has no particular points of conflict with any of these states, but they do not figure prominently in Indian security or strategic planning.

Singapore

The city-state of Singapore represents India's most mature and well-rounded security partnership in Southeast Asia—indeed, one of its deepest security relationships anywhere (see Figure 4.2). Singapore is the only nation that routinely trains its own armed forces on Indian soil. India's relationship with Singapore, moreover, stretches into every facet of engagement. The two nations are significant trading and investment partners, and they generally see eye-to-eye on diplomatic issues. Singapore is the home of the region's third-largest Indian diaspora, and largely for that reason is a major destination for Indian tourists.[8]

[8] Malaysia's diaspora population is much larger than Singapore's (more than 2 million, versus 700,000), but represents a smaller percentage of society (7.2 percent versus 13 percent). Myanmar has perhaps 2 million persons of Indian origin, but ties between this community and its Indian relatives are largely cut off and relatively few Indians travel to Myanmar for any reason (see Figures 3.1 and 6.4 for more detail).

Figure 4.2
Summary of India's Engagement with Singapore



NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.

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Singapore's strategic ties to India predate independence: As part of the Strait Settlements, Singapore was placed under British administrators in India from 1826 until 1867, and retained close links to India during the British colonial period.

In brief: Singapore is India's strongest and most straightforwardly positive relationship in Southeast Asia.

Connectivity

Singapore sits astride the Strait of Malacca, a natural bottleneck for maritime trade between India and East Asia. A large portion of India's maritime trade, valued at about $800 billion annually, transits the Strait.[9]

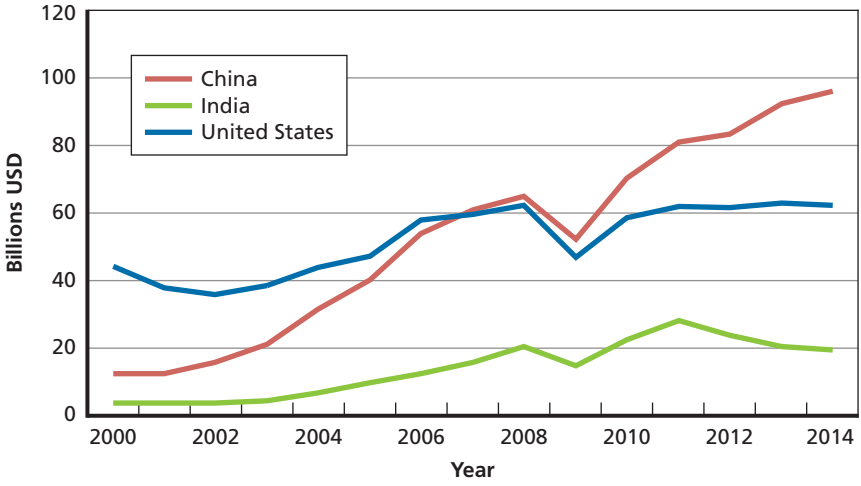
India has better air connectivity with Singapore than with any other nation in Southeast Asia. The city-state has direct flights to at least four Indian cities—Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai—at the time of writing, more than any other nation in Southeast Asia. Sea connectivity is robust, with the ports of Chennai and Kolkata handling the largest volume of cargo.

Trade

Economic ties between India and Singapore have expanded at a rapid pace since the early 1990s. Although trade has declined by nearly one-third from its high point in 2011 (see Figure 4.3), Singapore remains India's largest trade and investment partner in ASEAN and an essential offshore logistics and financial hub for many Indian corporations. There are about 4,000 registered Indian companies and nine Indian

[9] Sushil K. Singh, "India Shifts from South China Sea: Focuses on India Ocean," *Asia-Pacific Defense Forum*, September 26, 2012.

Figure 4.3
Singapore's Trade with India, China, and the United States (USD billions)



SOURCE: International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics Database 2013*, Washington, D.C., undated.
NOTE: The figures for this chart, as for all figures referenced to the IMF Direction of Trade Statistics Database, are based on RAND analysis of data contained in the subscription-only portion of the database, current as of June 13, 2013.
RAND *RR1021-4.3*

banks operating in Singapore.[10] India's main exports to Singapore are petroleum and petroleum products, while Singapore's main export to India is electronics.[11]

In 2005, India and Singapore signed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) that aimed to liberalize trade in goods

[10] FICCI, "India-Singapore CECA Boosts Bilateral Trade from US$14.04 bn. in 2009–2010 to $17.44 bn. in 2010–11," New Delhi, July 11, 2012.

[11] From 2002–2007, bilateral trade grew at an annual rate of 13.7 percent and grew from $2.3 billion in 2001–2002 to $11.5 billion in 2006–2007. From 2007 to 2011, bilateral trade almost doubled, from $15.85 billion to $28.19 billion. (Amitendu Palit, "India-Singapore Trade Relations," Singapore: Institute of South Asian Studies, ISAS Working Paper No. 46, June 16, 2008; United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics database, undated.) According to FICCI, Singapore is the second-largest source of FDI into India, with investments inflows of $15.9 billion from 2000 to 2011, or 10 percent of the total FDI inflow. India, in turn, is Singapore's eighth-largest foreign investor, with FDI of $23.4 billion as of January 2012.

and services, provide for investment protections, improve avoidance of double taxation, and increase e-commerce, cooperation regarding intellectual property, and other features.[12] India has sought to position the agreement as an entry point into ASEAN markets. Merchandise trade between India and Singapore doubled in the five-year period following the signing of the agreement.[13]

Energy

Since India is a net exporter of petroleum products to Singapore, the city-state helps advance India's energy goals by providing a base of financial and technical operations for potential resource development in sites such as the South China Sea, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Institutions/Diplomacy

Singaporean-Indian relations were somewhat strained during the Cold War, but have improved rapidly since. Singapore played a leading role in ensuring India's inclusion in ASEAN dialogue mechanisms, including annual ASEAN-India summits, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit and the APEC Working Groups.[14]

It is likely that India's diplomatic relationship with Singapore will continue to grow stronger under the Modi administration. During his tenure as chief minister of Gujarat, Modi established a cordial relationship with Singapore's then–Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong; a domestically oriented politician with relatively little international experience, Modi forged a closer personal bond with Goh than with perhaps any other foreign leader. After Modi's electoral victory—and even before he had officially been sworn in—Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien

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[12] International Enterprise Singapore, "Overview of India (CECA)," Singapore government, undated.

[13] Subhomoy Bhattacharjee and Ronojoy Banerjee, "Singapore CECA Tests India's Patience," *The Financial Express*, updated May 25, 2010. The CECA included a provision to review their schedules of specific commitments at the request of either party, with a view to facilitating the elimination of substantially all remaining discrimination between the parties with regard to trade in services.

[14] Ming Hwa Ting, "Singapore-India Relations: A Return to History," *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies* (ASEAS), Vol. 2, No. 2, 2009.

Loong invited him to visit the city-nation; Goh, now Emeritus Senior Minister, sent him a well-publicized personal note of congratulations.[15]

Security Cooperation

Singapore is India's most comprehensive security partner in the region, and one of its closest in the world. The two countries signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement in 2003, providing for an annual Defense Policy Dialogue to discuss security cooperation and strategic developments of mutual concern.[16]

Both countries have a common interest in maintaining the security of the regional sea lines of communication. Since 1994, the two countries have conducted annual naval training exercises, the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise. The naval exercise alternates each year in the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, and has expanded from an anti-submarine warfare exercise to more complex simulations and deployment of major surface vessels. The Singaporean and Indian armies also conduct an annual armor exercise (Bold Kurukshetra), and artillery exercise (Agni Warrior), both of them on Indian soil.[17]

Under a 2007 agreement, Republic of Singapore Air Force personnel train at the Kalaikunda Indian Air Force Base in West Bengal, and station Singaporean military aircraft there. The air-to-air live-fire exercises are held in a bounded area extending at least 40 kilometers along the Bay of Bengal coastline, and another 40 kilometers out to sea.[18] The two air forces conduct an annual bilateral air exercise, codenamed SINDEX, in which the Singapore Air Force brings its F16C/Ds to exercise with

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[15] Modi's personal tie with Goh: Ashok Malik, "Modi's Foreign Policy Playbook," Melbourne: University of Melbourne/Australia-India Institute, April 11, 2014. Lee's invitation and Goh's message to Modi: "Lee Invites Modi to Visit Singapore," *The Hindu*, May 19, 2014.

[16] Singapore Ministry of Defence, "Permanent Secretary (Defence) Visits India for 8th Defence Policy Dialogue," July 10, 2012.

[17] Naval exercise: Ting, 2009; "India and Singapore Carry Out Joint Naval Exercises," *DefenceNow*, March 22, 2011. Armor: Joseph P. Chacko, "Indian Army Conducts Exercise 'Bold Kurukshetra' with Singapore Army in Jhansi," *India Defence News*, March 8, 2011. Artillery: "S'pore & Indian Armies Conduct Joint Exercises in India," *Defense Forum India*, December 8, 2012.

[18] Interview with retired IAF air commodore, 2013.

the IAF's MiG-27 multirole aircraft.[19] Every second year, Singapore participates in the multilateral MILAN joint exercises in India's Andaman and Nicobar islands. In addition, the Indian Navy trains Singaporean submarine crews,[20] India provides ranges for Singapore's artillery,[21] and Singapore's army trains at the brigade level on Indian soil.[22]

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief

Singapore has not been a recipient of HA/DR assistance from India, but it has served as a staging area for international HA/DR efforts in which India took part. The most noteworthy recent instance of this was during the 2004 Asian tsunami, in which Singapore served as a vital staging area for relief efforts.

Balancer for China

Although its population is predominantly ethnic Chinese, the city-state has never fallen under China's political dominance as a result of its pro-American security orientation. This does not imply antagonism: Between 2008 and 2013, China had four fleet visits to Singapore, and two combined military exercises.[23] Singapore—like India—is proud of its status as a multiethnic and multilinguistic state. Ethnic Tamils constitute about 9.1 percent of the population, and Tamil is one of four

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[19] The Bilateral Agreement for the Conduct of Joint Military Training and Exercises in India was renewed at the 8th Defense Policy Dialogue in July 2012.

[20] Interview with analyst of Indian military strategy, 2013. See also "Singapore Navy Ships in Vizag," *The Hindu*, March 29, 2012.

[21] Interview with analyst of Indian military strategy, 2013. The training has taken place at Deolali, in the Western state of Maharashra (see below).

[22] For a complete discussion of the India-Singapore training relationships, see Pankaj Jha and Rahul Mishra, "Defence Cooperation: A Case Study of India and Singapore," *Air Power Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Summer 2010. The armor exercise has traditionally been conducted near Jhansi, in Central India. See Chacko, 2011. The 2012 Agni Warrior exercise was held near Deolali in Maharashtra: "S'pore & Indian Armies Conduct Joint Exercises in India," 2012.

[23] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 15.

officially recognized languages.[24] Singaporeans of Tamil origin who at the time of writing serve at the highest levels of government include Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Foreign Minister Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam, and Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Vivian Balakrishnan.[25]

It is not a coincidence that one of the most fervent champions of India's Look East policy has been Singapore's former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew. Lee is widely (if perhaps apocryphally) believed to have crafted the metaphor of ASEAN as a jet airplane, needing an Indian wing to balance its Chinese one to ensure a safe flight.[26]

Vietnam

In the view of at least one former top-level Indian policymaker, Vietnam is the single most important Southeast Asian nation for India's security interests.[27] Vietnam is India's longest-running security partner of substance, and this relationship remains robust (see Figure 4.4). Military ties between the two nations are founded on shared Soviet

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[24] CIA, "Singapore," *The World Factbook*, undated 2012 data on Indian population (with "Tamil" and "Indian" used interchangeably) in Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry, Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2014, undated, p. 5.

[25] S. R. Nathan, another politician of Tamil descent, served as Singapore's president from 1999 until 2011.

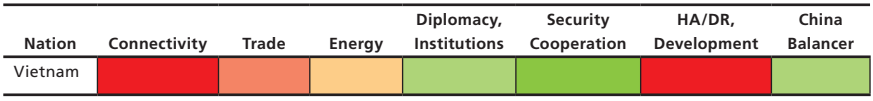
[26] "India, China Can Keep ASEAN Free of Turmoil," *The Hindu*, October 31, 2006. Many Indian sources interviewed for this project articulated the belief that the metaphor was crafted by Lee Kuan Yew. There does not, however, appear to be a well-documented instance of Lee having articulated this metaphor in public. It appears to have been first expressed in public by Lee's successor, Goh Chok Tong. There are several formulations, but the earliest appears to be: "The ASEAN jumbo jet has one wing in the making in the East, through agreements with China and Japan. India's proposal provides the second wing. With this, we can take off." Cited in Lee Hoong Chua, "India Makes Trade Offer to ASEAN," *Straits Times*, November 6, 2002.

[27] This was a minority opinion: The two states cited by this former policymaker as the second- and third-ranked countries (Singapore and Indonesia) were more commonly ranked above Vietnam. Among both military and civilians interviewed, Myanmar was described as belonging to a different category altogether: a field of opportunity, rather than an established partner nation.

platforms, and India's future role in the Southeast Asian security structure may rest largely on a model similar to its relationship with Vietnam: India's unique capabilities to operate, repair, and perhaps manufacture military hardware compatible with Soviet or Russian models.[28]

India has strong historical connections to the southern part of Vietnam, but weaker cultural links to the northern parts of the country that traditionally fell under China's sphere of influence. From the 7th century into the 19th century, the Kingdom of Champa controlled such sites as modern Hue, My Son, Da Nang, Hoi An, and Cam Ranh. This civilization, however, was ethnically, linguistically, and religiously distinct from the Vietnamese mainstream. It was administered by the ancestors of the modern-day Cham, a tiny group quite separate from the majority Kinh.[29] When the Champa Kingdom fell to the Vietnamese emperor Minh Mang in 1832, what remained of Indian cultural linkage was severed. The modern relationship is based on Cold War politics and post–Cold War *realpolitik* more than on longstanding bonds of culture.

Figure 4.4
Summary of India's Engagement with Vietnam



NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.

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[28] That is the view of at least one influential voice in India's security policy debate. Interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013.

[29] Today, the Cham comprise less than 0.2 percent of Vietnam's population (162,000 out of 90 million), and are predominantly Hindu. In Cambodia, the Cham form about 1.5 percent of the population (217,000 out of 14 million), and are predominantly Muslim. The Cham in modern Vietnam speak a language in the Malayo-Polynesian family that has virtually no connection to Vietnamese. The Kinh, who comprise 85 percent of the population of Vietnam, are traditionally Buddhist, with a significant Christian minority.

Connectivity

The endpoints of India's dual land-based connectivity plans to Southeast Asia lie in Vietnam. One is a proposed superhighway stretching from Kolkata to Ho Chi Minh City,[30] the other a railway extending from New Delhi to Hanoi.[31] Both projects have a beginning and an end—the existing road and rail networks in India and Vietnam, respectively—but lack a middle: The infrastructure in Myanmar remains virtually unbuilt.

Trade

Straining against domestic restraints that include limited human capacity, poor infrastructure, and bureaucratic hurdles, Indian outsourcing and information technology firms have started to shift some operations to Vietnam in search of educated, low-cost labor. This shift, however, remains a work in progress: Trade linkages were not a significant part of the relationship until Vietnam's introduction of the economic liberalization policy known as *doi moi* (renovation) in 1986, and over the past 15 years have grown modestly from a negligible baseline (see Figure 4.5). Vietnam's economic growth has been hugely trade-dependent since the introduction of *doi moi*, with exports accounting for approximately two-thirds of the Vietnamese GDP.[32] India and Vietnam recognized each other as equal World Trade Organization trading partners in 2009,[33] and both countries are part of the 2010 ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement.[34]

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[30] Nelson, 2012.

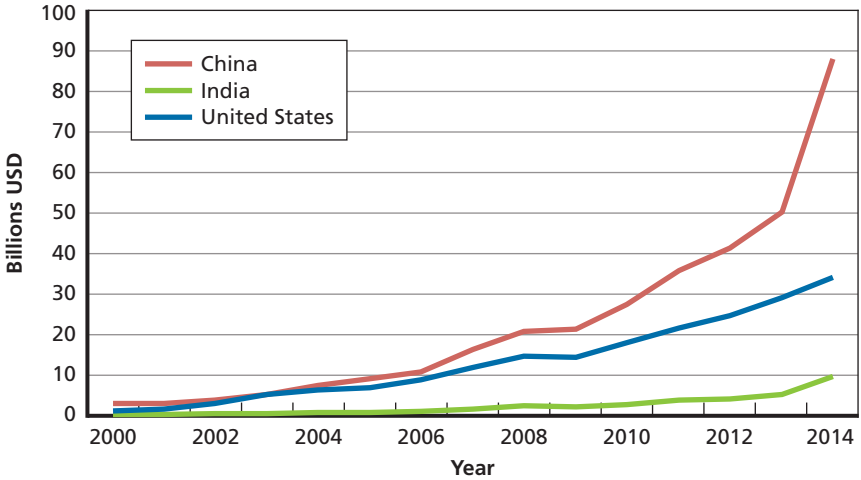
[31] "New Delhi-Hanoi Rail Link Likely: PM," *Economic Times*, September 4, 2003.

[32] Globaltrade.net, *International Trade in Vietnam*, undated. For Indian information technology (IT) and business process outsourcing (BPO) links to Vietnam, see Julie Pham, "Vietnam's Tech Industry Strives to Prove It's a World-Class Hub of Outsourcing Providers," *Forbes*, November 27, 2012.

[33] "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Recognition of Vietnam's Full Market Economy Status," EximGuru.com, October 25, 2009.

[34] Smitha Francis, "The ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement: A Sectoral Impact Analysis of Increased Trade Integration in Goods," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 46, No. 2, January 8–14, 2011.

Figure 4.5
Vietnam's Trade with India, China, and the United States (USD billions)



SOURCE: International Monetary Fund, 2013.
RAND *RR1021-4.5*

The economic side of the relationship, however, lags well behind the security side. India's exports to Vietnam increased from $986 million in 2006 to $2.7 billion in 2011, while imports from Vietnam grew from $167 million in 2006 to $1.1 billion in 2011.[35] This represented an increase of 323 percent, but in absolute terms it represents only a small portion of either country's international trade.[36]

[35] FICCI, "India-Vietnam Trade Relations," New Delhi, 2013b.

[36] The balance of trade has continuously been in favor of India, and Vietnam has been seeking trade and tariff concessions. Major items of India's export to Vietnam include food ingredients, metals, and pharmaceuticals, while India's imports from Vietnam include crude oil, coal, spices, and computer and electronic components. See Pranav Kumar, "India-Vietnam Economic Relations: Opportunities and Challenges," New Delhi: Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, IPCS Special Report No. 57, July 2008.

Energy

After Vietnam opened maritime blocks for oil exploration in the late 1980s, India was one of the first nations to express active interest.[37] India's state-owned oil company, Oil & Natural Gas Corporation, finally entered into a deal in 2011 with the Vietnamese state-owned oil company to jointly explore in the South China Sea and reaffirmed its commitment in 2012, despite Chinese warnings and the fact that China put up for international bidding the same oil blocks that Vietnam had leased to India.[38] According to two sources interviewed, Vietnam's decision to sell these blocks to India was motivated largely by a desire to secure India's diplomatic support for its South China Sea claims—one source reported that India recently attempted to withdraw its stake, and Vietnam demanded a multimillion-dollar payment in compensation.[39]

Institutions/Diplomacy

In early years of both nations' independence, anticolonial sentiment brought Indian and Vietnamese leaders together. Indian Prime Minister Nehru was the first head of government to visit Hanoi, barely a week after the Viet Minh took over from the French in 1954. India supported the Hanoi government during the Vietnam War, souring relations with the United States. Both countries fought border wars with China: India in 1962 (when Vietnam sided with its then-patron in Beijing) and Vietnam in 1979 (when India, deciding not to hold a grudge, sided with Vietnam). Throughout the Cold War period, both India and Vietnam maintained close ties with the Soviet Union—and their shared reliance on Warsaw Pact military hardware remains a powerful bond two decades after the dissolution of the USSR.

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[37] Interview with retired Indian diplomat who served as chief of mission in mainland Southeast Asia, 2013.

[38] Harsh V. Pant, "South China Sea: New Arena of Sino-Indian Rivalry," *YaleGlobal*, August 2, 2012a.

[39] Interviews with scholar of South Asia, 2013; and retired Indian diplomat who served as chief of mission in mainland Southeast Asia, 2013.

India and Vietnam have provided each other diplomatic and institutional support, even at the cost of relations with other countries. When Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978 and displaced the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime, the action was fiercely opposed by the United States, China, and ASEAN. India's diplomatic support for Vietnam caused friction with most other Southeast Asian states for over a decade. For its part, Vietnam was one of the only countries in the world to support India's 1998 nuclear tests.[40] Vietnam was an early supporter of India's candidacy for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, advocated for India's inclusion in the East Asia Summit in 2005, and for a time helped block Pakistan's inclusion in the ASEAN Regional Forum.[41] India supported Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization, and helped Vietnam secure a temporary seat in the UN Security Council in 2007.[42]

Security Cooperation

Defense cooperation between India and Vietnam long predates India's Look East policy and was based on a congruent geopolitical outlook during the Cold War. Indian military delegations visited Vietnam after the Sino-Vietnam War of 1979 to study how Vietnamese border troops defeated attacks by China's regular army formations. After 15 years of informal security consultation that focused on shared use of Soviet military hardware, a defense cooperation agreement was formalized when Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes visited Vietnam in 2000. The countries institutionalized a framework for defense ministry

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[40] According to a former Indian defense attaché in Hanoi, this decision stemmed in large part from India's servicing of Vietnam's MiG-21s. Interview with retired Indian Army flag officer, 2013.

[41] Pakistan joined in 2004.

[42] Iskander Rehman, "The Indo-Vietnamese Strategic Partnership," *BBC World Backgrounder*, September 17, 2009a. Additionally political developments are outlined in Nhan Dan, "India, Vietnam Pledge Closer Strategic Ties," *Vietnam Communist Government News*, July 7, 2007; Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia, "Statement at the Inaugural Session Seminar on India-Vietnam Strategic Partnership: Future Directions," Hanoi: Indian Council of World Affairs, July 17, 2012; and "Vietnam-India Strategic Partnership in Spotlight," *VietNamNet*, July 18, 2012.

discussions, agreed to a series of naval exercises, and established a training program for Vietnamese submarine crews aircraft pilots.[43]

In addition to training, security ties between India and Vietnam involve high-level bilateral visits, defense industrial cooperation, intelligence-sharing, and joint exercises. India and Vietnam have a common interest in the security of sea lines of communication. At the 2010 ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus Eight, Indian Defense Minister A. K. Antony laid special emphasis on bolstering naval ties through regular port calls to Vietnam.

The fact that both countries use similar Soviet and Russian military equipment has allowed India to undertake servicing and maintenance of Vietnam's military hardware (especially MiG21s) and naval ports. India also supplies spare parts to Vietnam's warships, submarines, and missile boats. In September 2011, India agreed to provide intensive training in submarine operations to Vietnam: Vietnam has ordered six Kilo-class submarines from Russia, and India has been operating Kilo-class submarines since 1986. In July 2013, India further offered Vietnam a $100 million credit line to purchase military equipment, the first such offer by India to a country outside India's traditional sphere of influence.[44] There have been media reports of mutual interest in a sale to Vietnam of the supersonic Brahmos cruise missiles, manufactured by an Indian-Russian joint venture.[45]

Vietnam, in turn, agreed to provide berthing facilities to Indian naval ships at Nha Trang. A retired Indian naval flag officer, however,

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[43] Subhash Kapila, "India-Vietnam Strategic Partnership: The Convergence of Interests," South Asia Analysis Group Paper 177, November 2, 2012. Often, the training occurs at the same facilities at which India hosts other military trainees: Submarine training is conducted in the Andhra Pradesh port of Visakhapatnam, where Singaporean submariners have also been trained. (Rajat Pandit, "India Kicks Off Sub Training for Vietnamese Navy," *Times of India*, November 22, 2013.) Vietnamese pilots have sought the same training on Sukhoi jet fighters previously given to Malaysian pilots. "Vietnam Asks Pilot Training for Sukhoi from India," *Indian Defence*, July 12, 2013.

[44] "Global Insider: India Shows Willingness to Defend Economic Interests in Southeast Asia," *World Politics Review*, July 8, 2013.

[45] Amruta Karambelkar, "Indo-Vietnam Defence Relations: Strategically Responsive," New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), January 31, 2012; David Brewster, "Test Looms for India over China," *The Australian*, September 2, 2011.

expressed doubt that India would be interested in basing rights at Cam Ranh Bay even if they were offered, because "we can't afford it."[46] This highlights the fact that shared interests and longstanding bonds do not necessarily indicate a stepped-up Indian military presence in the South China Sea at any point in the near future.

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief

India's HA/DR cooperation with Vietnam has been extremely limited to date. During 2013's Typhoon Haiyan, however, India offered disaster assistance to Vietnam, while providing HA/DR to the hard-hit Philippines.[47]

Balancer for China

Strategically placed on the eastern fringe of Southeast Asia with a 3,260-kilometer coastline, stretching along almost the entire length of the South China Sea, Vietnam is regarded by India as a barrier to the expansion of Chinese influence. Much as China has attempted to constrain India by partnering with Pakistan, India has sought to balance China by bolstering defense cooperation with Vietnam.[48] Hanoi, for its part, seeks Indian support for its wide-ranging maritime disputes with China; the most significant of these are in the South China Sea (including the Spratly and Paracel Islands), the maritime boundary along Vietnam's coastline, territories north of Borneo, and other areas within the "Nine-Dash Line."[49] Vietnam has been eager to move from a largely military relationship to a broader engagement with India.[50] It

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[46] Interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013.

[47] "India to Send Relief to Super Typhoon-Hit Philippines," *Times of India*, November 13, 2013.

[48] Rehman, 2009a.

[49] The "Nine-Dash Line" refers to the territory, demarcated by nine dashes on Chinese maps dating to 1947, encompassing the 3.5 million square kilometers in the South China Sea and surrounding waters that are claimed by China. See David Lague, "Analysis: China's Nine-Dashed Line in the South China Sea," Reuters, March 25, 2012.

[50] Le Hong Hiep, "Vietnam's Strategic Trajectory: From Internal Development to External Engagement," *Strategic Insights*, No. 59, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), June 2012.

is important, however, to keep this commonality of apparent interests in perspective: Both nations conduct far more trade with China than they do with each other. Despite friction in the relationship, China provided more than one-fifth of Vietnam's FDI inflow in 2010, and has had an average of one fleet visit annually between 2008–2013.[51]

Myanmar/Burma

India's engagement with Myanmar is perhaps the clearest example of a core theme of this report: the gap between India's own perceptions of its relationship with Southeast Asia and the perceptions of Southeast Asian players themselves (see Figure 4.6). From India's perspective, the relationship with Myanmar is a vital national interest, founded on millennia-old ties of culture and history, bolstered by political moves of the past two decades, and growing at an impressive rate. From the perspective of Myanmar, however, India has been long on rhetoric but short on delivery, has repeatedly failed to take advantage of opportunities for engagement, is constantly being shown up by China, the United States, and other players, and doesn't really seem interested in changing the dynamic. From the standpoint of the United States, this gap between India's perception of its engagement and ground realities presents an opportunity: Given the harmony between Indian and American goals *vis-à-vis* Myanmar, U.S. policymakers can advance their own strategic interests by persuading and enabling India to increase its bilateral engagement there.

Figure 4.6
Summary of India's Engagement with Myanmar

Nation	Connectivity	Trade	Energy	Diplomacy, Institutions	Security Cooperation	HA/DR, Development	China Balancer
Myanmar							

NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.

RAND *RR1021-4.6*

[51] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 15.

As the only Southeast Asian state sharing a land border with India, and the only one that shared a colonial administrative history,[52] Myanmar falls into a category different from the rest of the region. Indian policymakers often speak of Myanmar as a "near-neighbor," sometimes in terms similar to those used for South Asian states that India considers to fall within its sphere of influence.[53] Myanmar represents great opportunity for India: All hopes of land connectivity run through Myanmar, and after long seclusion the country is finally open for engagement.

In the view of Indian policymakers interviewed, Myanmar is India's most significant success story in Southeast Asia. India has supported the democracy movement since the late 1980s, and reached out to the military junta while virtually all Western nations shunned it and helped usher in the Saffron Revolution. "We were ahead of the curve," one former top-level Indian official said proudly.[54] Several sources mentioned the fact that Aung San Suu Kyi's mother Khin Kyi served as ambassador to India, and that in her girlhood, the future Burmese leader was friends with the teen-age Rajiv Gandhi.

This narrative, however, is not the one heard in Myanmar. In interviews conducted for this report, both Burmese citizens and foreign observers told a narrative that was almost precisely the opposite: India alienated the military junta by supporting Aung San Suu Kyi for nearly

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[52] Singapore and Malaysia, then known as the Straits Settlement, were administered from Calcutta during the later East India Company years and for the first years after transfer of administration to the Crown following the 1857 Revolt (i.e., administered from Calcutta 1826–1867), but were not formally part of the Indian Raj. For more detail on the 19th- and early 20th-century history of Myanmar, see Michael Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009; and Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001. For discussion of historical, religious, and cultural ties between Burma and its South Asian neighbors in the premodern period, see Blank, 2000, pp. 105–109.

[53] The "near-neighbor" category is generally taken to include Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, and Bangladesh. Pakistan, while sharing a border with India, is often left out of this formulation for reasons of political sensitivity. For Myanmar's place in the set, see Rao, 2013.

[54] Interview with former senior Indian security official, 2013; and interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013.

two decades, then alienated Suu Kyi and the democracy movement by abandoning them without getting any concession from the junta, and has been virtually a nonpresence ever since. "Any pro-Indian sentiment from Ms. Suu Kyi's childhood seems to have long since faded," noted an international development official.[55]

Connectivity

India's ambitions for land connectivity to Southeast Asia run—quite literally—straight through Myanmar. To date, the border is as far as they have gotten. The Kolkata-to-Ho Chi Minh City highway reaches only as far as the town of Moreh in the Indian state of Manipur. The Delhi-to-Hanoi railway now terminates at Dimapur in the Indian state of Nagaland. The most significant connectivity project India is currently undertaking is the development of the port of Sittwe in Myanmar's Rakhine State, and that is proceeding far more slowly than a rival Chinese port project slightly to the south at Kyaukphyu. Another prospective Indian infrastructure project is the proposed $120 million Kaladan Multi-Modal Project, involving the development of the Kaladan River (in Chin State, bordering on India and Bangladesh) as a bilateral highway. (For a more extensive discussion of India's connectivity ambitions in Myanmar, see Chapter Three.)

India's air connectivity to Myanmar remains woefully underdeveloped. As of January 2013, India's national carrier ranked only 20th in weekly capacity to Yangon airport, with a single weekly flight to Kolkata bearing a capacity of 836 passengers; by contrast, two Thai carriers had a weekly capacity of more than 27,500 passengers, five Chinese airlines had a combined capacity of 9,100, two Malaysian carriers had 7,000, and Singapore's flights carried 6,500 passengers weekly; other nations with greater air connectivity than India included Australia (2,500 passengers per week), Vietnam (2,200), Qatar (1,500), and Taiwan (1,100).[56]

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[55] Interview with official involved with development in Southeast Asia, 2013.

[56] "Myanmar Poised for More Rapid Growth in 2013 as Foreign Carriers Expand and Local LCC launches," Centre for Aviation, January 10, 2013.

Trade

India was Myanmar's third-largest export market in 2010 ($958 million), after Thailand ($3.18 billion) and China ($2.08 billion).[57] In the same year, India was Myanmar's seventh-largest source of imports ($164 million).[58] Myanmar's exports to India are largely agricultural products; India sends Myanmar steel products and pharmaceuticals—about half of the pharmaceuticals in Myanmar come from India.[59] Trade has grown slowly since the Myanmar began its reform program in 2011—in contrast to Myanmar's trade with China, which has grown explosively (see Figure 4.7).

India is not a prominent source of FDI in Myanmar, although in recent years there has been at least rhetorical support for increased Indian investment through government credit lines. India is the 13th-largest investor in Myanmar, with an estimated $189 million. By contrast, China's share of Myanmar's FDI flow in 2010 was an implausible, yet accurate, 116 percent.[60]

Much of India's trade with Myanmar is not reflected in official figures, however. The border between the countries is a transit point for the trafficking of narcotics, small arms, illegally harvested timber, and illicitly mined gemstones.

Energy

India sees Myanmar as a material part of the solution to its energy conundrum, but Myanmar's oil reserves are largely unexplored and its

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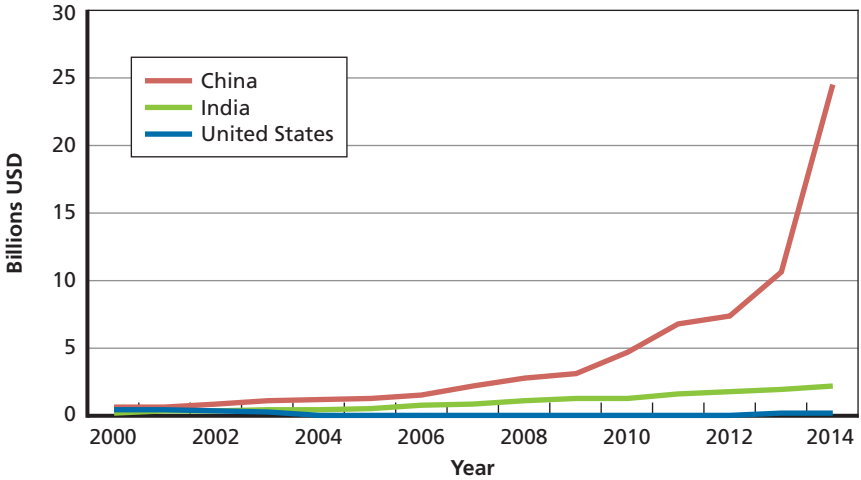
[57] China's trade figures show the huge value of illicit sectors of the economy. Officially, Hong Kong (which shares no land border with Myanmar, and therefore is not the prime smuggling destination) accounts for $1.6 billion; the rest of China—including Yunnan province, which shares a largely unpoliced land border with Myanmar—has less than one-third of this sum: $476 million.

[58] Countries ranked ahead of India in exports to Myanmar were China, Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, and Indonesia: United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database, undated.

[59] Government of India, Embassy of India to Myanmar, "India-Myanmar Commercial and Economic Relations," November 14, 2012.

[60] The mathematical paradox stems from a net withdrawal of FDI by other nations in that year. See Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 12.

Figure 4.7
Myanmar's Trade with India, China, and the United States (USD billions)



SOURCE: International Monetary Fund, 2013.
RAND *RR1021-4.7*

gas reserves are only partially proven. When Myanmar recently awarded ten onshore oil and gas blocks to eight companies for development, one of the eight companies to gain a block was Jubilant Energy, India.[61] ONGC—together with the Indian natural gas processor and distributor GAIL Ltd., Daewoo of Korea, the Korean Gas Corporation, and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise—is aggressively exploring and developing potential fields. India's state-owned oil company, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC), holds 17 percent of the stakes in two blocks off the coast of Rakhine.[62] Reserves in one block are estimated at 3.38 trillion cubic feet, with 1.52 trillion cubic feet estimated in the other. ONGC's share of investment was approximately

[61] "Myanmar Awards Onshore Oil and Gas Blocks—Biggest Energy Tender in Years," 2012.

[62] Long-term prospects for development of these resources will be affected by the security in Rakhine State. Religious and ethnic violence flared up in 2012 in Rakhine, and could be a factor in future economic projections.

$271 million in mid-2012.[63] Whether Myanmar will be able to supply more than a fraction of India's burgeoning energy demand, however, remains to be seen.

Agreements signed during the 2011 visit by President Thein Sein to New Delhi include the extension by India of a concessional $500 million line of credit for development projects and cooperation in the area of oil and natural gas. The two sides reiterated their commitment to cooperate in the implementation of the Tamanthi and Shwezaye projects on the Chindwin River Basin in Myanmar.[64]

Institutions/Diplomacy

India and Burma gained their independence from Britain within six months of each other, and shared a common Non-Aligned, postcolonial outlook during the subsequent decade. Relations soured with Burma's increased discrimination against its ethnic Indian minority and the large-scale expulsion of Indians ordered by General Ne Win in 1962. The *low* point of government-to-government relations may have been the *high* point in people-to-people sentiment: After Burma's "8888 Revolt"—the August 8, 1988 prodemocracy uprising led by Aung San Suu Kyi followed by a military crackdown—India supported the democracy movement and gave shelter to many activists. In 1992, India was a sponsor of a UN resolution condemning the junta for human rights violations.[65]

India maintained its prodemocracy stance throughout the early 1990s, gradually shifting gears later in the decade. When India's Look East policy was announced in 1992, Myanmar was far from joining the pack of Asian Tigers, and therefore did not factor prominently in the economic aspirations of Prime Minister Rao. The Burmese junta, officially the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), focused

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[63] ONGC Videsh Ltd., 2013a.

[64] Arvind Gupta, "Myanmar's Critical Role in Bolstering India's Look East Policy," Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, IDSA Comment, February 2, 2012.

[65] Thin Thin Aung and Soe Myint, "India-Burma Relations," in Aung Zaw et al., *Challenges to Democratization in Burma*, Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001.

on consolidating its authority rather than seeking diplomatic approval from India or other nations. In the later years of the decade, however, India helped Myanmar take small steps to end its diplomatic isolation. For example, Indian sponsorship enabled Myanmar to join the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Initiative.[66]

In the 2000s, India shifted to a policy of noninterference in Myanmar's domestic affairs—just at the point when Myanmar's internal politics shifted away from continued rule by the junta. Delhi offered little criticism during the "Saffron Revolution"—the 2007 antigovernment protests and violent crackdown that many believe demonstrated the inevitability of political reform. On a government-to-government level, India's position yielded some benefits: In 2010, days after Myanmar announced the suspension of construction of a controversial dam being built by a Chinese company at Myitsone, junta leader Than Shwe made a state visit to India and signed five treaties with Prime Minister Singh. The Treaty on Mutual Assistance on Criminal Matters pledged both governments to keep their respective territory from being used for training, sanctuary, and other operations by terrorist or insurgent organizations.[67]

Political transition in Myanmar began the following year, and relations between the two nations is also in transition. In the view of some observers, India is paying a diplomatic price for what many Burmese see as Delhi's abandonment of Aung San Suu Kyi and the democracy movement during the Saffron Revolution.[68] Myanmar's reformist president, former junta leader Thein Sein, visited New Delhi in October 2011. Two months later, the Speaker of Myanmar's lower house of

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[66] BIMSTEC countries are Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal; Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Initiative countries are India, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

[67] Jyoti Thottam, "India and Burma Get Down to Business," *Time World*, July 28, 2010.

[68] Interview with Asia-based official involved with international finance, 2013; interview with official involved with development in Southeast Asia, 2013.

parliament led a parliamentary delegation to India to learn about the functioning of Indian democracy.[69]

Prime Minister Singh's visit to Myanmar in May 2012 was the first by an Indian prime minister since Rajiv Gandhi's visit in 1987. India and Myanmar signed a dozen pacts, including establishment of a Border Area Development Program and a joint trade and investment forum. India has offered to help Myanmar improve democratic practices through parliamentary- and electoral-process training and the strengthening of human rights institutions.[70] In November 2014, Narendra Modi visited Naypidaw to attend the East Asia Summit—his first visit to a Southeast Asian nation as prime minister.

Despite these steps, close observers of Myanmar's politics report that Suu Kyi and her supporters have not forgiven India for what they regard as a deep betrayal.[71] Moreover, continuing attacks on the Rohingya and other Muslim communities in Myanmar have often been cast by the majority population in ethnic as well as religious terms, with anti–South Asian sentiment becoming increasingly vocal in recent years.[72]

Security Cooperation

An important driver for security cooperation between India and Myanmar is the presence of insurgent groups and transnational criminal networks in both countries. Insurgent groups in northeastern Indian

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[69] Udai Bhanu Singh, "An Assessment of Manmohan Singh's Visit to Myanmar," New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, IDSA Issue Brief, June 1, 2012.

[70] Rahul Mishra, "Revitalising India–Myanmar Relations," *East Asia Forum*, July 3, 2012.

[71] Interviews with Western and Asian diplomatic officials, Yangon, April 3 and April 5, 2013.

[72] The Rohingyas are a Muslim community primarily resident in Myanmar's Rakhine state. Both Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi have been ambivalent about whether this community deserves the protections and rights of other citizens. They are often described as Bengali migrants rather than "true" Burmese, despite the fact that most Rohingya families have lived in Rakhine state since the era preceding independence: Many, perhaps most, migrated when Burma was governed as part of the British Raj in India. A nativist movement centered around the Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu, called "969" in reference to three sets of Buddhist principles, increasingly targets both Rohingyas and other Muslims—as well as any other Burmese citizens regarded as ethnically South Asian rather than Burman.

states, particularly Manipur and Nagaland, have often enjoyed safe haven in Burmese territory. Groups such as the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang and the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak have maintained semipermanent camps in Myanmar.

Ever since its independence, Myanmar has likewise been confronted with armed insurgencies by ethnic minorities—in some cases, groups with ethnic or cultural linkages across the Indian border. Moreover, Myanmar was a major source of poppy cultivation throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and from the mid-1990s onward has been a significant site of methamphetamine production; India is a transit country for narcotics and a source for precursor chemicals for processing methamphetamine. Transborder strategic alliances among traffickers in drugs and persons have funded insurgents and criminal networks in both nations.[73] The Tatmadaw (the name of the Myanmar military) has repeatedly assured Indian authorities that it would take action against Indian insurgent groups in Myanmar, while India has been accommodating to the Myanmar army's hot pursuit of insurgents across the border with India.[74]

Despite objections from the United Kingdom, the Indian Navy transferred four British-origin BN-2 Defender Islander maritime patrol aircraft to Myanmar in 2006 and 2007 and is in the process of transferring two more; New Delhi said the aircraft would be stripped of all armaments and deployed "exclusively on relief and humanitarian missions." The Indian Navy also plans to help establish a naval aviation training center in Myanmar.[75] The Myanmar Navy has participated in India's MILAN naval exercises.[76]

The Indian Army has transferred light artillery guns and armored personnel carriers to Myanmar. In 2007, there were reports that India

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[73] Wasbir Hussain, "Insurgency in India's Northeast Cross-Border Links and Strategic Alliances," South Asia Terrorism Portal, undated.

[74] Pankaj Jha, "India's Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2011, pp. 54–55.

[75] "Indian Navy to Transfer BN2 Maritime Surveillance Aircraft to Myanmar," *India Defence*, May 12, 2007.

[76] Indian Navy, *History of MILAN*, undated.

was planning to transfer the indigenously designed Advanced Light Helicopter, but the Indian government denied this. (The helicopter has European Union–origin components and any sale would have violated EU sanctions on Myanmar at the time.)[77] The Indian Air Force chief, during a visit to Naypyidaw in 2006, offered support in upgrading the avionics of fighter aircraft in Myanmar's inventory. Also in 2006, the Indian Army offered special warfare training for Myanmar military personnel, repeating the offer during the August 2012 visit to India of the Myanmar armed forces commander, General Min Aung Hlaing.[78]

Depending on developments within Myanmar, security could become a source of friction between the two nations. One of the most significant uncertainties of Myanmar's reform program is the regime's willingness to reach political accommodation with the wide range of ethnically based local insurgencies. If Naypyidaw proves unwilling or unable to forge a political settlement, it risks tarnishing the reformist image it has worked hard to craft. That could set back security cooperation with democratic nations, including India.

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief

Sharing a long land border and coastlines along the Bay of Bengal, India and Myanmar are subject to many of same weather patterns and potential natural disasters: therefore, it is likely that whenever Myanmar faces the prospect of a weather-related humanitarian crisis, India will be facing the very same threat. This may impede India's ability to provide resources in a crisis, but it may also permit the two nations to coordinate a combined response. India's proximity to Myanmar, and particularly the proximity of India's Andaman and Nicobar Island bases, provides a geographical foundation for closer HA/DR cooperation.

The most noteworthy example of New Delhi's provision of HA/DR to Myanmar was Operation Sahayata, when India was one of the

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[77] "India Rejects Amnesty Report on Copter Sale to Myanmar," *Indian Express*, July 17, 2007.

[78] Vijay Sakhuja, "India and Myanmar: Choices for Military Cooperation," Indian Council of World Affairs, September 11, 2012.

first countries permitted to send assistance during Cyclone Nargis. Two IAF aircraft brought tents and medical supplies to Yangon on May 8, 2008, at a time when the junta was denying access to the United States and almost all other prospective donors. Two Indian naval vessels, the INS *Rana* and the INS *Kirpan*, were also granted permission to dock near Yangon and unload additional relief supplies.[79] India was one of only two nations (the other was Thailand) whose nationals were initially permitted to operate in-country on relief efforts: During a period of approximately two weeks, a team of Indian military doctors treated roughly 15,000 cyclone victims.[80]

Balancer for China

After supporting an array of Communist insurgencies in Burma during the Maoist period, China became the regime's main international patron in the late 1980s and maintained that position throughout the 1990s and 2000s. During this period, Beijing supplied enormous amounts of arms to Myanmar, and provided much-needed diplomatic support. But this has always been an uneasy alliance, with tensions arising over China's dominant role in Myanmar's economy, exploitation of Myanmar's natural resources, and border security issues.[81]

As an integral part of its post-2011 reform efforts, and drawing on tentative efforts beginning in the 1990s, Myanmar has sought to reintegrate itself to the world community. Myanmar's rapprochement with the United States is particularly noteworthy, but Naypyidaw has seen a similar warming of ties with the nations of the European Union, with fellow ASEAN members, and with economically potent states such as Japan and South Korea.

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[79] India's HA/DR: "'Operation Sahayata' to Help Myanmar," *The Hindu*, March 8, 2008; denial of access: "U.N. Aid Flight Lands in Burma; U.S. Still Denied Access," Associated Press, March 8, 2008.

[80] Nilanthi Samaranayake, Catherine Lea, and Dmitry Gorenburg, *Improving U.S.-India HA/DR Coordination in the Indian Ocean*, Center for Naval Analyses, July 2014, p. 26.

[81] International Crisis Group, "China's Myanmar Strategy: Elections, Ethnic Politics and Economics," International Crisis Group Asia Briefing No. 112, Beijing/Jakarta/Brussels: ICG, September 21, 2010.

In a sense, Myanmar's goal in such outreach fits perfectly with India's own ambition *vis-à-vis* Beijing: India seeks to balance (but not supplant) the role of China in Southeast Asia; Myanmar seeks to have a variety of nations balance (but not supplant) the role that China plays in its own territory. The role that India will play in such balancing, however, remains an open question.

From Myanmar's perspective, closer engagement with India has the advantage of providing additional security in its volatile northern border areas—for reasons of geography and ethnic ties, India's northeastern states can prove helpful (or harmful) to Myanmar's goal of ending a variety of long-running ethnic-based insurgencies. Also helpful from Myanmar's standpoint is India's stated desire to improve land and sea connectivity through infrastructure projects. From India's perspective, Myanmar provides mirroring benefits—aid in combating insurgency and instability in its northeast, as well as land/sea connectivity—while also providing a valuable asset in its rivalry with China: Closer ties may have persuaded Naypyidaw to revoke permission for suspected Chinese electronic listening posts on its Bay of Bengal coastline.[82]

Despite the optimistic rhetoric from New Delhi and the built-in advantages of geography, history, and demographics, the relationship between India and Myanmar has yet to take off. India certainly seems to be a less significant player in Myanmar than China, the United States, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, or Singapore. Even Vietnam is a more visible economic presence in Yangon than India. Trade and development are moving very slowly, as are infrastructure projects. Despite India's claim to having softened up the Burmese military for political change, India provided far less security assistance in the years immediately preceding the democratic reforms than China, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, or North Korea—each of these nations gave more aid than India, and none of them are noted champions of democracy.[83]

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[82] Donovan C. Chau, "Leaning to All Sides: What the United States May Learn from Chinese Political Warfare in Burma," *Special Warfare*, July-September 2012.

[83] Between 2001 and 2008, China, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine supplied $1.1 billion in arms to Myanmar—81 times as much as India did. (Stockholm International Peace Research

India was only Myanmar's seventh-largest supplier of arms from 1989 to 2013 (due to sales of $5 million in 2000 and $9 million in 2006), a period during which China's arms transfers totaled more than $2.8 billion (see Figure 4.8).[84]

The vast disparity between India's military engagement and that of China, or even Russia, casts doubt on the impact of Delhi's pre–Saffron Revolution engagement. Unlike the Western and ASEAN states, however, India's lack of security engagement has not been offset by corresponding trade or investment. "Nobody here takes India seriously," said one senior foreign observer in Yangon.[85]

Thailand

India and Thailand enjoy a mature security partnership, and a growing economic partnership as well. There are few significant stumbling blocks on the horizon, and the ties do not appear to be threatened by Thailand's military coup of May 2014. But the relationship remains underdeveloped, particularly when compared with the booming ties between Thailand and China (see Figure 4.9).

The modern relationship between India and Thailand grows out of historical and cultural ties rooted in centuries of continuous interaction. Thai culture and society fall well within the Indian cultural sphere: Buddhism, the religion of perhaps 95 percent of the Thai population,[86] had its origin in India; the Thai alphabet is derived from Sanskrit's *devanagari* script; Thailand's national epic, the *Ramakien*,

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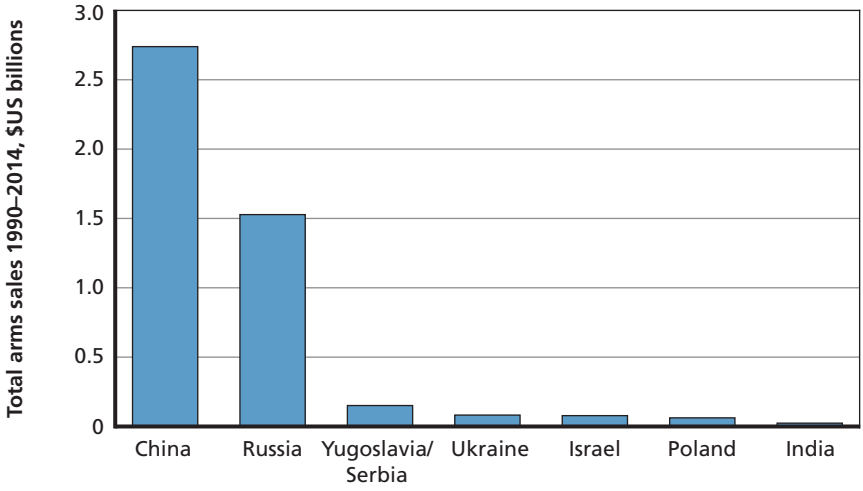
Institute [SIPRI], *Arms Transfer Database*, undated.) North Korea is not listed on the SIPRI database as having sold conventional arms to Myanmar in this period, but its military support to the Burmese junta during the years preceding the Saffron Revolution was, in some crucial respects, far deeper than that of any nation other than China. For details, see classified annex to this report.

84 SIPRI, *Arms Transfer Database*, undated. The SIPRI database only begins recording foreign sales to Myanmar in 1989.

85 Interview with official involved with development in Southeast Asia, 2013.

86 This percentage is the highest of any nation in the world. See Buddha Dharma Education Association & Buddhanet, undated.

Figure 4.8
Myanmar's Arms Purchases from Top Seven Suppliers (in $US billions)



SOURCE: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, undated.
RAND *RR1021-4.8*

is a localized version of the Hindu epic *Ramayana*.[87] From an Indian standpoint, these cultural ties remain highly relevant; from a Thai perspective, much less so.

Figure 4.9
Summary of India's Engagement with Thailand

Nation	Connectivity	Trade	Energy	Diplomacy, Institutions	Security Cooperation	HA/DR, Development	China Balancer
Thailand							

NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.
RAND *RR1021-4.9*

[87] For a brief discussion of the impact of the *Ramayana* in Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, see Blank, 2000, p. 33. The continuing influence of the epic can be seen in the fact that every king of Thailand since 1782 has taken the name Rama, after the Indian epic's hero.

Connectivity

Ninety-five percent of Thailand's imports and exports are transported by sea, and Thailand therefore shares with India a critical interest in maritime connectivity and security of transportation in the Indian Ocean.[88] There has been much talk of India and Thailand working together to develop port facilities in Myanmar, but no significant cooperation is under way.

Given both the rhetorical warmth of the Indo-Thai relationship and Indian ambitions to extend both highway and railway linkages through Thailand to the rest of mainland Southeast Asia, the lack of on-the-ground action is somewhat jarring. The two countries have discussed cooperation on a variety of infrastructure projects, including the Thailand-Myanmar-India Trilateral Highway and the Chennai-Dawei corridor project.[89] None of these plans has made significant progress. A Western diplomatic official in Bangkok interviewed for this project struggled to think of concrete manifestations of Indian presence in the country: "They come here for shopping," he offered.[90]

Trade

Thailand and India signed a free-trade agreement framework in 2004, and both are part of the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement in Goods. The two countries cooperate in the BIMSTEC framework and have been engaged in negotiations on a CECA that includes goods, services, and investment.[91]

Bilateral trade doubled between 2007 and 2011, but remained level after that (see Figure 4.10), and the balance is increasingly favoring Thailand. During the four years preceding 2011, India's imports

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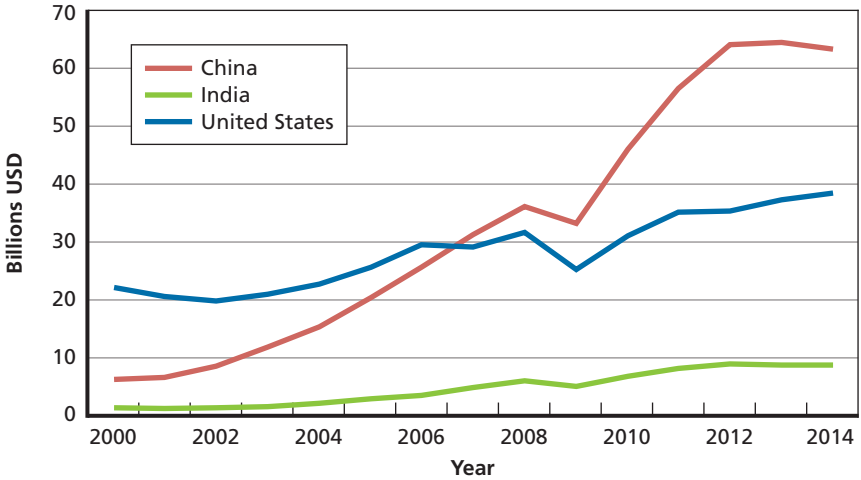
[88] Suriya Pornsuriya, "Maritime Terrorism: Thailand's Perspective," New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation, 2004.

[89] "India, Thailand Discuss Connectivity, Security Issues and FTA," *Economic Times*, August 10, 2012. Thailand is also developing the port of Ranong on its west coast as the gateway for trade with South Asia.

[90] Interview with Western diplomat, Bangkok, April 1, 2013.

[91] "Thailand to Expand Trade and Investment with India," *Thailand Business News*, January 26, 2012; "India, Thailand Discuss Connectivity, Security Issues and FTA," 2012.

Figure 4.10
Thailand's Trade with India, China, and the United States (USD billions)



SOURCE: International Monetary Fund, 2013.
RAND *RR1021-4.10*

from Thailand more than doubled, while Thailand's imports from India only increased by half. Thailand's trade with India remains lower than its trade with Japan, China, the United States, Malaysia, Singapore, or Australia.[92] India ranks only 13th as a source of FDI in Thailand, with investments in information technology services, manufacturing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and textiles; by contrast, China supplies 12 percent of Thailand's FDI flow.[93] Thailand ranks as the third-largest investor in India from ASEAN, but only 19th overall in cumulative FDI.[94]

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[92] Bilateral trade totals: $4.3 billion in 2007, $9.3 billion in 2011. India's imports from Thailand: $2.2 billion in 2007, $5.1 billion in 2011. Thailand's imports from India: $2.1 billion in 2007, $3.0 billion in 2011. United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database, undated.

[93] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 12.

[94] Yogendra Singh, "India Thailand Relations," Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, IPCS Special Report No. 46, July 2007.

Energy

Both India and Thailand face energy shortfalls, and are more likely to be competitors than collaborators in the contest for Southeast Asian energy resources. There is discussion of joint Thai-Indian development of Myanmar's energy resources, but to date little has come of such talks.

Institutions/Diplomacy

Five years after India adopted its Look East policy, Thailand announced a parallel "Look West" program in 1997. Both countries share the goal of ensuring that political reforms are solidified in Myanmar—a nation with which both countries share borders—and that Myanmar does not retreat into China's sphere of dominance. India and Thailand are engaged in bilateral cooperation against terrorism and transnational criminal networks through intelligence-sharing and law enforcement cooperation. Thailand has followed the lead of Singapore in seeking to proactively incorporate India more deeply into the diplomatic framework of Southeast Asia. Thai prime ministers have made six visits to India since 2001: three by Thaksin Shinawatra between 2001 and 2005, and one each by Surayud Chulanont, Abhisit Vejjajiva, and Yingluck Shinawatra.[95]

In addition to ASEAN-related regional mechanisms, India and Thailand work together on the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Initiative, along with Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. If Thailand's deepening internal civil-military schism creates a rift with the United States and other Western democracies, India may play an increasingly significant role as diplomatic intermediary.

Security Cooperation

Thailand was a staunch ally of the United States throughout the Cold War, which resulted in relatively chilly relations with Soviet-leaning India. The breakup of the USSR permitted relations to thaw, and Thailand's economic success at the time helped persuade Prime Minister

[95] Visit by Surayud Chulanont was in 2007, by Abhisit Vejjajiva in 2011, and by Yingluck Shinawatra in 2012.

Rao that his nation should "Look East." Closer defense and security ties soon followed. The Thai government now regards security cooperation as a top policy priority in its relationship with India. A Joint Working Group on Security Cooperation was established in 2003 to provide a framework for cooperation in the areas of counterterrorism, military cooperation, maritime security, international economic and cybercrimes, antinarcotics, and money laundering.[96]

Since 1995, Thailand has participated in India's biannual MILAN naval exercise. On a biannual basis, India and Thailand conduct coordinated patrols in the areas adjacent to their international maritime boundary and a joint counterinsurgency and counterterrorism exercise.[97] A protocol signed in 2007 established procedures for coordinated maritime patrols between the Indian and the Royal Thai navies. During Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's visit to India in January 2012, the two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defense Cooperation to further streamline and enhance bilateral defense cooperation. Besides joint maritime patrols, Thailand-India defense cooperation includes regular joint exercises, officers' training at their respective military training institutions, exchange of visits at various levels, regular Joint Working Group Meetings, and Staff Talks.[98]

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief

Like Myanmar, Thailand shares many weather patterns with the eastern coastal states of India. Both nations were severely hit by the 2004 tsunami, and both face the prospect of similar natural disasters in the Bay of Bengal. Disaster relief has not played a significant role in the

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[96] Royal Thai Embassy to India, *Thai-Indo Relations*, undated.

[97] The coordinated patrols are called Indo-Thai CORPAT, and the counterterrorism/counterinsurgency exercise is called MAITREE. Rajat Pandit, India, and Thailand Kick Off Their Joint Combat Exercise, Maitree, at the Sikh Regimental Centre in Ramgarh, with the Focus Being on Counter-Insurgency Operations in Urban and Rural Terrain," *Times of India*, September 11, 2012

[98] "India Embarks on Various Military Drills with U.S., Thailand, and Bangladesh," *Defence Now*, September 13, 2012.

India-Thailand relationship to date, but it might prove a focal point for future military exercises.

Balancer for China

Although Thailand conducted more military exercises with India than it did with China in 2012, during the five years between 2008 and 2013 the picture was different: The Chinese navy has made eight port visits in Thailand and conducted six combined military exercises. As Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold note, Thailand is "China's longest standing and most important security partner in Southeast Asia."[99] In 2007, Thailand became the first country in the world to conduct combined training exercises with the PLA, beginning with special forces and extending to marine corps.[100] Thailand also was the first Southeast Asian nation to undertake licensed production of Chinese military systems: an army-focused multiple rocket launcher systems.[101]

Thailand does not regard China as a particular threat to its own core interests. Unlike smaller states in the region, or states whose relationship with the United States do not approach the level of ally, Thailand does not feel a particularly strong need for India to serve as a balancer against China. This raises the question: Why does Thailand place such a high value on engagement with India, particularly in the security sphere? The answer may lie not to Thailand's north, but to its east, west, and south: Thailand has had periodic border clashes with Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos over the past three decades, and faces a long-running insurgency in its four southernmost provinces fueled by discontent among the ethnic Malay population.[102] Thailand's interest

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[99] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 15. For number of exchanges, see p. 12.

[100] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, pp. 13, 15. The authors defined "combine training exercise" thus: "Differentiating them from simple combined exercises, these events involve smaller numbers of soldiers (typically companies or battalions) that are mixed with their foreign counterparts down to the squad level for more extended periods of time to study each other's tactical procedures" (p. 13).

[101] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 15.

[102] Between 2004 and 2013, the Pattani insurgency in the Malay Muslim-dominated southern four provinces of Thailand took more than 5,300 lives: for a population of 1.8 million, this is a rate approximately double that of Afghanistan during the same period; leading

in bringing India into the Southeast Asian diplomatic family—and of bolstering its own security relations with India simultaneously—may have less to do with concerns about China than about all of its neighbors *except* China.[103]

This localized dynamic should inform U.S. strategic planning. While many Southeast Asian states seek closer engagement with India as a balancer for China, that is not necessarily the case for Thailand. From a U.S. standpoint, one of the most significant advantages of a growing India-Thailand security relationship may be a side benefit not intended by either New Delhi or Bangkok: the Indian military's increased interoperability with U.S. military hardware and familiarity with Western military procedures. Given Thailand's strong U.S. tilt in its hardware and training methods, every time India exercises with Thai military units it grows more comfortable with American gear and practices.

Malaysia

India's relationship with Malaysia is generally good (see Figure 4.11), and has several sources of ballast: a shared legacy of British colonialism,

Figure 4.11
Summary of India's Engagement with Malaysia

Nation	Connectivity	Trade	Energy	Diplomacy, Institutions	Security Cooperation	HA/DR, Development	China Balancer
Malaysia							

NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.
RAND RR1021-4.11

figures in this insurgency, including the influential cleric Sapae-ing, are rumored to receive sanctuary in Malaysia. One of the authors of this report has interviewed current and former Pattani insurgents not only in Thailand, but also in Malaysia and Indonesia. These interviews can be found in Jonah Blank, "The Strange Thai Insurgents Who Like Sorcery and Get High on Cough Syrup," Atlantic.com, May 7, 2013.

[103] This line of analysis does not posit a Thai strategy in which China plays no part, merely one in which China is not the notional adversary: Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos all have close security relationships with China and Thailand may seek Indian engagement as a balancer against potential Chinese support for these mainland Southeast Asian states.

leading to a political class comfortable communicating in English and familiar with each other's legal system; a shared legacy of facing overt Chinese aggression during the Maoist era; and an Indian diaspora community which forms about 7.2 percent of the population of Malaysia, and an even higher percentage of the professional and business communities.[104] This diaspora is a meaningful bond between the two countries—but could become a potential source of friction depending on political developments in one or both nations. Tamils represent the third-largest ethnicity in Malaysia, after Malays and ethnic Chinese. Unlike the ethnic Tamil population of Singapore, the Malaysian Indian community has not been well integrated to the nation's governing class. Tamils complain of economic preferences and educational quotas set aside for *bumiputra* (Malay "sons of the soil"), as well as of restrictions on the religious rights of non-Muslims (most Tamils are Hindu).[105] Prime Minister Najib Razak has embarked on a project of political reform that includes economic liberalization and a shift away from policies of Malay preferences, but the poor showing of his party among non-Malays in the 2013 election casts doubt on the sustainability of this approach.[106] If Malaysian politics take a turn toward ethnic divisiveness, this could have a disproportionate impact on relations with India: Future Indian governments, particularly if politics revert

[104]Examples of Chinese aggression: In India, a 1962 invasion; in Malaysia, a Beijing-supported Communist insurgency that began during colonial times and continued long after independence. For demographic data on Malaysia, see Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2010. For discussion of linguistic issues related to integration of the Tamil community in Malaysia, see Sumit Ganguly, "The Politics of Language Policies in Malaysia and Singapore," in Michael Edward Brown and Sumit Ganguly, eds., *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003, pp. 239–263. For a description of perhaps the most famous cultural celebration of Malaysia's Indian diaspora community, see Blank, 2000, pp. 223–226.

[105]Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, "Marginalisation and the Indian Community in Malaysia," RSIS Commentary, No. 131, December 3, 2007.

[106]Historically, the Indian diaspora has felt alienated from the United Malays National Organization (UMNO—the party leading the governing Barisan Nasional coalition). In Malaysia's May 2013 general election, the Barisan Nasional was returned to power, but with a smaller seat count than ever before and a mandate weakened after losing the popular vote; Prime Minister Najib has come under pressure from members of his own party to refocus UMNO's attentions on the ethnic-Malay majority, and on nonurban voters more broadly.

to the pre-2014 norm of coalition rule after 2019, will likely be reliant on the goodwill of at least one of the two parties based in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and the treatment of Tamil diaspora communities will have a disproportionate impact on India's relations with Southeast Asian states.

Connectivity

Malaysia straddles the sea lines of communication along the Strait of Malacca, making it a nation of great concern to India's maritime connectivity plans. Given that secure navigation of the Strait is a goal shared with every other major trading nation, however, India's ambitions here do not require a particular set of policy actions. From India's standpoint, the connectivity goal boils down to maintenance of the *status quo*.

Trade

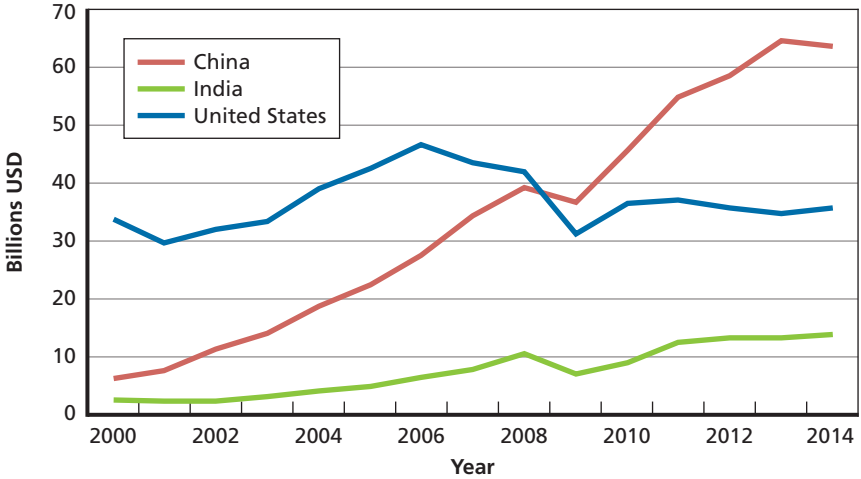
Malaysia has one of Southeast Asia's most developed economies, and India's trade relationship with Malaysia is in some ways a downsized version of its relationship with Singapore (see Figure 4.12). Malaysia and India signed a CECA in February 2011, with terms similar to those of a trade agreement between India and Singapore. The India-Malaysia agreement envisages liberalization of trade in goods and services, investment protection, and economic cooperation. In the area of services, Malaysia and India agreed to facilitate the temporary entry of service suppliers, professionals, and business visitors that would allow nationals of each country to perform contract work in the other.[107]

Malaysia is India's third-largest trade partner within ASEAN, after Singapore and Indonesia. Bilateral trade grew from $6.6 billion in 2006 to $10.5 billion in 2011, a 59 percent growth despite a one-year decline following the 2009 global slowdown,[108] and has grown more

[107] Malaysia Ministry of International Trade and Industry, "Questions on Malaysia-India CECA (MICECA)," June 30, 2011.

[108] FICCI, "India-Malaysia Trade Relations," New Delhi, 2013a.

Figure 4.12
Malaysia's Trade with India, China, and the United States (USD billions)



SOURCE: International Monetary Fund, 2013.
RAND *RR1021-4.12*

slowly since. Malaysia has traditionally had a surplus in its bilateral trade with India.[109]

Malaysia is only the 24th-largest investor in India, with cumulative FDI inflows of $2 billion from 1991 to 2010. In addition, it is believed that there are about $6 billion in Malaysian investments in India invested through the Mauritius route.[110] Malaysian construction companies' largest presence outside Malaysia is in India. Indian companies have invested about $2 billion in Malaysia, making India the seventh-largest source of FDI in Malaysia. There are more than

[109] Leading Malaysian exports to India include palm oil, petroleum, and electronic goods, while Indian exports include food, machinery, and chemicals. High Commission of India to Malaysia, *Economic and Commercial Relations*, December 2013.

[110] This is a channel commonly used to avoid tax burdens; 40 percent of FDI into India arrives via Mauritius, since that country levies no tax on capital gains, and India has a treaty exempting Mauritius-based firms from paying Indian capital gains tax. See Anil Sasi, "40 Percent of India's FDI Comes from This Bldg.," *Indian Express*, August 21, 2012; and Radhika Merwin, "Spurt in FDI from Mauritius in April-Feb Period," *The Hindu/BusinessLine*, May 6, 2013.

100 Indian companies, including some 60 joint ventures, operating in Malaysia.[111]

As is the case for China's trade with Malaysia, India's trade relationship relations remain largely concentrated in the diaspora community.

Energy

Malaysia is India's largest supplier of both oil and gas, and therefore tops India's priority list for current energy interests. This situation may not continue far into the future, however: India may soon find itself squeezed out of the market for much of Malaysia's energy resources.

While Malaysia has Asia's third-largest proven oil reserves, nearly half of its production goes for domestic consumption, and domestic needs have been rising even as production has been falling.[112] Malaysia is the world's third-largest exporter of LNG and has 83 trillion cubic feet of proven reserves, but the competition for it is brisk: 42 percent of production goes for domestic use and Malaysia's four top LNG customers—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China—are better positioned than India to bid for and transport whatever gas enters the market.[113]

Institutions/Diplomacy

After a Cold War estrangement mirroring what India experienced with other Southeast Asian partners of the United States, India and Malaysia have been rediscovering connections that were largely left to the diaspora for decades.[114] Relations between the two nations were periodically complicated in the 1990s by Malaysia's support for Pakistani positions in diplomatic forums. Malaysia backed Pakistan's admission into the ASEAN Regional Forum and has supported Pakistan's request for UN mediation of the Kashmir dispute.[115] Nevertheless, both coun-

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[111] Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "India-Malaysia Relations," January 2012a.

[112] EIA, 2013e.

[113] EIA, 2013e.

[114] Pankaj Jha, 2011, p. 52.

[115] Ihtashamul Haque, "Mahathir Backs UN Kashmir Resolution," Dawn.com, November 7, 2002. Malaysia's pro-Pakistan diplomatic positions were particularly pronounced during

tries share the strategic interests of balancing China's influence in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, countering international terrorism, and developing synergies from cooperation in the defense and science and technology sectors.[116]

Beginning with India's Look East policy and accelerating after the first strategic dialogue between the two countries in New Delhi in 2007, the Indian and Malaysian governments have engaged in proactive efforts to take the bilateral relationship to a higher level. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib visited India in January 2010, followed by Indian Prime Minister Singh's visit to Kuala Lumpur in October 2010. During Singh's visit to Malaysia, the two governments set a date for signing the trade agreement and established a joint working group on terrorism.[117]

Security Cooperation

If India's trade relationship with Malaysia resembles a downscale version of its relationship with Singapore, so too does its security relationship. In the security sphere, as in the economic one, the two neighboring Southeast Asian states appeal to India for similar reasons: They share a strategic caution about the potential for Chinese regional dominance, they are toward the high end of technical capacity among Southeast Asian nations, and they share a British colonial legacy that carries over in language, political structures, and a familiarity of outlook among the elite segments of society.

Malaysia has traditionally relied heavily on Russian arms,[118] so India's expertise in servicing Soviet or Russian systems is a powerful incentive to security cooperation. Since 1993, Delhi and Kuala Lumpur have held periodic sessions of the Malaysia-India Defense Cooperation

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the long tenure of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who remains a senior behind-the-scenes political player in Malaysia.

[116] Amit Singh, "India-Malaysia Strategic Relations," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, Vol. 7, No. 1, July 22, 2011.

[117] "Joint Statement on the Framework for the India-Malaysia Strategic Partnership," *The Hindu*, October 27, 2010.

[118] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 24.

Meeting, the first such arrangement Malaysia has made with a nation outside of Southeast Asia. The primary area of cooperation is the training of Malaysian military personnel, in particular those tasked with maintenance and operation of such Russian aircraft as the MiG-29 Fulcrum and Su30 MKM. Malaysia has also explored Indian training of its Scorpene submarine crews and maintenance of the French/Spanish submarines, acquired in 2008.[119]

Indian defense companies and military personnel have regularly participated in the Malaysian Defense Exhibitions and Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition, and Malaysia regularly sends high-level delegations to the DEF EXPOs and Aerospace Expositions shows in India.[120] The first joint exercise between the Indian and Malaysian militaries was held in Malaysia in October 2012: "Harimau Shakti" focused on counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and urban warfare.[121]

India is sensitive to Malaysia's identity as a Muslim-majority nation, but one in which Islamist parties have traditionally not played a major role in policy formation. Malaysia has not been an incubator of terrorist groups, but it has on occasion served as a logistics node and fundraising site for groups such as the Indonesia-based al Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah. New Delhi and Kuala Lumpur share a concern that Malaysian territory not be used by such groups, and that the Malaysian national identity remain tolerant of non-Muslim citizens; India's concern is particularly focused on the Tamil Hindu diaspora community.

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief

Like Myanmar and Thailand, Malaysia shares many weather patterns with the eastern coastal states of India. Malaysia was affected as severely by the 2004 Asian tsunami as India and Thailand were, but its Western coastline is subject to same type of natural disasters that might affect

[119] Pankaj Jha, 2011, pp. 52–54.

[120] High Commission of India to Malaysia, *Defence Co-Operation*, undated-a.

[121] Vivek Raghuvanshi, "1st Indian-Malaysian Exercise Ends This Week," *Defense News*, October 22, 2012.

India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as well as such states as Orissa, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. Disaster relief has not played a significant role in the India-Malaysia relationship to date, but could be a part of future military exercises.

Balancer for China

India's potential role as a balancer for China is a leading factor in Malaysia's outreach on security matters. Like Singapore—and much more so than Thailand—Malaysia regards the rise of China as a possible strategic challenge. While Singapore's governing elite is predominantly of ethnic Chinese origin, Malaysia's sizable ethnic Chinese community has been largely excluded from governing circles. From the perspective of Malaysia's *bumiputra* political elite, the threat posed by Beijing is a matter not of alarmist speculation, but clear history: From 1948 to 1960, Maoist China supported a Communist insurgency against both the colonial state of Malaya and the newly independent nation of Malaysia; the insurgency was relaunched in 1967, and did not formally end until the surrender of Malayan Communist Party leader Chin Peng in 1989.[122] And the prospect for armed conflict is not entirely a thing of the past: Malaysia has maritime claims in the Spratly Islands and other parts of the South China Sea, as well as in maritime areas north of Borneo and in other parts of the "Nine-Dash Line" that overlap with Chinese claims.

Malaysia's leadership, therefore, sees the need for India to play a balancing role *vis-à-vis* China in starker terms than do the leaders of perhaps any Southeast Asian nation except Vietnam. For Kuala Lumpur, the threat posed by China is a material fact rather than a theoretical possibility. This does not prevent Malaysia from engaging in security cooperation with China: During the five years through 2013, it received three Chinese port visits and participated in one combined exercise.[123] But the relative strength and high funding priority of Malaysia's armed forces suggest an ongoing, top-level desire to be

[122]Douglas Martin, "Chin Peng, Malaysian Rebel, Dies at 88," *New York Times*, September 16, 2003.

[123]Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 12.

prepared for conflict with a peer or superior adversary. Compared with neighboring Indonesia, for example, Malaysia spends 80 percent as much on its military (despite having only one-third as many troops in uniform), and its air force is considered superior to that of Indonesia.[124] The fact that Malaysia has active South China Sea claims is likely a factor in the decision to prioritize military funding, and particularly funding of the air force.

Indonesia

The largest nation in Southeast Asia is, in the view of some Indian strategists, also the most important long-term partner for India in the region. For maritime issues including transit of the Straits of Malacca and piracy, Indonesia will continue to loom large. For energy and trade, Indonesia represents enormous untapped potential—albeit in the energy sector, a potential unlikely to be realized. As a whole, Indonesia is another good example of the disconnect between rhetoric and action in India's engagement with Southeast Asia: Delhi sees a healthy relationship founded on ancient and modern bonds of culture and outlook, while the regional power sees a somewhat hollow relationship lacking solid foundations of robust trade, security ties, or closely aligned national interests.

India and Indonesia do have long historical and cultural linkages. Prior to the arrival of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, pre-Islamic Indianized kingdoms such as the Sanjaya dynasty (best known for the Prambanan temple complex in Java) adopted Hindu beliefs, practices, and architectural styles. The island of Bali preserves Hindu religion and culture to this day, and Hinduism is one of the five officially recognized religions in Indonesia. The national airline of Indonesia takes its name, Garuda, from the anthropomorphic bird that serves as the sacred vehicle for the Hindu deity Vishnu.

These two nations have many similarities. They are both enormous states knitting together a huge variety of ethnic, linguistic, and religious

[124] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, pp. 26–27.

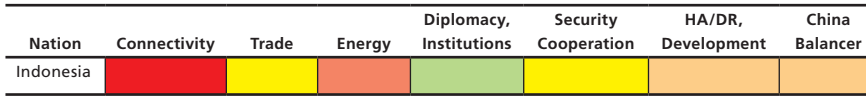
communities; both nations see themselves as the "natural" leaders of their respective regions; and both have ambitions of playing on the global rather than the regional stage. Given their wide range of shared interests, surprisingly little actual engagement has taken place (see Figure 4.13). Trade and security cooperation between the two nations remains stunted. HA/DR is one exception: India has been more involved with disaster relief in Indonesia than in perhaps any other country outside its immediate neighborhood. The inauguration of new leaders in both nations may provide a basis for closer cooperation: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesia's President Joko Widodo both began five-year terms in 2014, both rose from very modest family backgrounds through the democratic process, and both enjoy a popular mandate to reinvigorate economies that have been too sclerotic and inward-looking to support their countries' growth and ambitions.

Connectivity

Indonesia shares India's goal of ensuring free and safe navigation of the Strait of Malacca. The threat of piracy throughout Indonesian waters is of concern to India, so the two nations have considerable scope for greater cooperation on maritime issues.

Air connectivity between India and Indonesia is, perhaps surprisingly, nonexistent. There are no direct commercial flights between the two nations. Garuda Indonesia and Air India, the national carriers, fly to 36 and 31 international destinations, respectively—not one

Figure 4.13
Summary of India's Engagement with Indonesia



NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.

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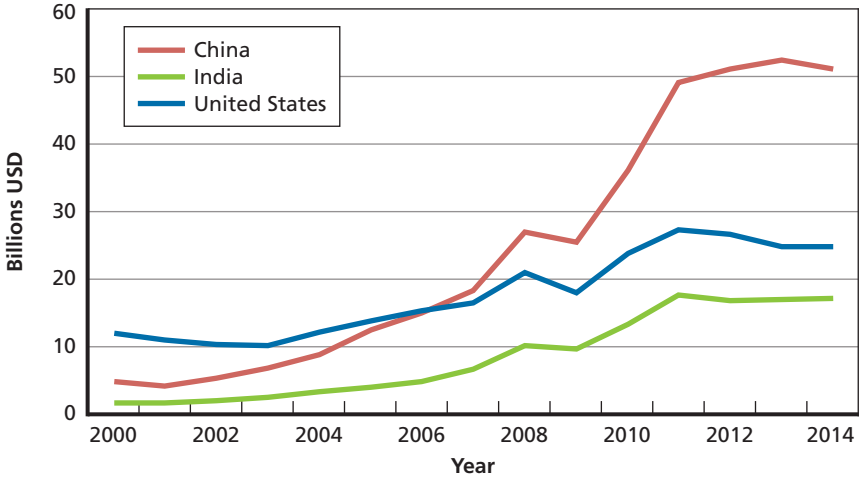
of them in either country's territory.[125] Air passengers seeking transit between the two countries must fly via Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, or nations further afield.

Trade

India and Indonesia both entered the new century after painful economic crises in the 1990s.[126] Compared with the stagnation of the past, India and Indonesia are expanding their economic relationship at a furious pace: Between 2006 and 2011, bilateral trade nearly tripled, going from $6.2 billion to $17.7 billion; through 2014, it experienced a small decline (see Figure 4.14). Indonesia is India's second-largest trad-

Figure 4.14
Indonesia's Trade with India, China, and the United States (USD billions)



SOURCE: International Monetary Fund, 2013.
RAND *RR1021-4.14*

[125] Some of Indonesia's air connectivity comes through codeshares—for example, to Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Brunei; Indian carriers (both Air India and private competitors) have limited codeshare connectivity to nations including Singapore and South Korea. For air routes, see Garuda Indonesia and Air India websites.

[126] India's balance of payment crisis hit in 1991, and spurred economic liberalization that has proceeded since then. Indonesia's crisis came in 1997, and even a $43 billion bailout from the IMF was insufficient to prevent the fall of longtime strongman Suharto from power.

ing partner in ASEAN, after Singapore.[127] But when compared with other nations' trade relationships with Indonesia, India's results are less impressive: China began the same 2006–2011 period where India ended it (at about $17 billion per year), and from this much higher starting point it expanded by 188 percent, to $49 billion; like India, it has experienced a modest decline since then. India is not among Indonesia's nine largest sources of imports, and in 2011 ranked behind Japan, China, Singapore, the United States, and South Korea as an export destination for Indonesia.

Both emerging market economies have been slowly liberalizing their trade and investment policies, and the two nations established a joint study group in 2010 to examine the feasibility of a CECA between the two countries; the study suggested significant economic complementary issues between the two countries with potential for expanded economic ties that could be enhanced by fostering outward investment flows.[128] During Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's first visit to India in 2005, he and Indian Prime Minister Singh initiated a strategic partnership. The two countries agreed in 2012 to fast-track the talks, and India asked for an upward revision of the bilateral trade target to $25 billion by 2014; the actual figure fell short by 32 percent.[129]

India has investments in Indonesia in the textiles, steel, automotive, banking, and natural resources sectors. Indonesian investments in India are much smaller. Garuda Foods has set up a joint venture with a company in Bangalore to launch food products in India.[130]

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[127]India Ministry of External Affairs, "India-Indonesia Relations," August 2012b. Main items of Indian exports to Indonesia include petroleum products and motor vehicles, while Indonesia's main exports to India include palm oil and coal.

[128]India-Indonesia Joint Study Group, *Report of the Joint Study Group on the Feasibility of India-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)*, Jakarta, September 15, 2009.

[129]Priyadarshi Siddhanta, "India Asks Indonesia to Up Bilateral Trade Target," *Indian Express*, March 6, 2012.

[130]Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2012b.

Energy

Some Indian observers see Indonesia as a potential source for energy supplies in the future. This may be a misguided hope: Indonesia has significant energy resources, but even more significant domestic energy needs. Indonesia has proven reserves of 3.9 billion barrels of oil and 141 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, but for a nation of 237 million, these resources are insufficient to meet domestic need. Indonesia has been a net importer of both crude oil and refined products since 2004, and suspended its OPEC membership in January 2009 to concentrate on meeting demand at home.[131] Despite far larger gas reserves, a combination of protectionism, economic nationalism, and other foreign competitors likely impede Indonesia's potential to become a significant supplier of LNG to India.

More than 40 Indian companies are mining or exploring coal blocks in Indonesia. India's Adani group signed an agreement with Bukit Asam, an Indonesian state coal company, for a $1.6 billion project to build and operate a 200-kilometer (km) railway line and port in South Sumatra.[132]

Institutions/Diplomacy

India and Indonesia shared an institutional kinship in the early years of independence, but have only recently begun rebuilding ties that were severed during the Cold War. In the 1950s, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indonesian leader Sukarno worked together to create the Non-Aligned Movement, culminating in the Bandung Conference held in the Indonesian city of that name in 1955. Both countries drifted into *de facto* alignment, on opposite sides of the U.S.-Soviet divide: Anti-Communist purges in Indonesia following the failed 1965 coup, and the ouster of Sukarno followed by the ascension of the anti-Communist general Suharto, shifted Indonesia closer to the United States and further from both India and the rest of the Soviet-leaning Non-Aligned nations.

India and Indonesia are respectively the world's largest and third-largest democracies today, a new source of political congruence that

[131] EIA, "Indonesia," January 9, 2013a.

[132] Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2012b.

has gained increasing significance since the fall of the military-dominated Suharto regime in 1998. While nonalignment formed an institutional bond between the nations in the 1950s, democracy is beginning to do so more than half a century later. Both nations regard themselves as proof that democracy need not be viewed as a Western construct. In the joint statement during President Yudhoyono's 2011 visit to India, he and Indian Prime Minister Singh noted, "Indonesia and India are natural partners as two developing democratic countries in the region." The two leaders underlined their shared commitment to "multiculturalism, pluralism and diversity," and affirmed their desire to "play an active role in the promotion of democracy, peace and stability in Asia Pacific region and the world at large."[133] Whether future years will bring substantial progress in translating these words to action remains to be seen.

Security Cooperation

Like Malaysia and Vietnam, Indonesia is heavily reliant on Russian military hardware[134]—hence a rationale for the Tentara Nasional Indonesia, Indonesia's military, to seek out Indian expertise and security cooperation. From the standpoint of risk, Indian planners are wary of the possibility that a nation with the world's largest Muslim population could take a turn toward radicalism and international terrorism.[135]

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[133] C. Raja Mohan, "India and Indonesia: A New Strategic Partnership," *The Eurasia Review*, February 6, 2011.

[134] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 24.

[135] It is noteworthy that the two largest Muslim organizations in the world are both Indonesian, and both moderate in outlook: Nadhlatul Ulama has membership larger than the population of Saudi Arabia, and Muhammadiyah is only slightly smaller; for discussion of these two groups, and their role as ballast for moderate Islam in Southeast Asia, see Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity Among the Daudi Bohras*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 264. As of 2012, Indonesia had approximately 209 million Muslims and 87.2 percent of its population identifies as Muslim. See Drew Desilver, "World Muslim Population More Widespread Than You Might Think," Pew Research Center, June 7, 2013. A retired flag officer expressed a grave potential risk in Indonesia (and, to a lesser extent, Malaysia) "going the way of Pakistan"—turning away from a largely secular form of Islam and embracing a more militant jihadist political agenda. Interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013.

This was a more immediate threat in the years directly following the ouster of Suharto in 1998, when a variety of violent Islamist groups created havoc in sites including Indonesia's capital, and also its tourist haven (and sole Hindu outpost) of Bali. The most dangerous terrorist group based in Indonesia, Jemaah Islamiyah, maintained operational contact with al Qaeda and other groups headquartered in the territory of India's rival Pakistan.[136] The success of the Indonesian state in combatting Jemaah Islamiyah, including the prosecution of the group's founder Abu Bakr Basyir in 2010, has changed the dynamic of the India-Indonesian relationship—instead of viewing Indonesia largely through the prism of counterterrorism, India now takes a more holistic approach. One of its aspirations for Indonesia, as for Malaysia, is to see these majority-Muslim states continue on their current course of self-identifying as tolerant, multireligious states, with radical Islamist groups playing no policy role.

India and Indonesia signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement in 2001 and hold regular military exchanges, including high-level visits, ship visits, and the assignment of military personnel to each other's staff colleges. In 2007, the two sides established a Joint Defense Cooperation Committee.[137] Speaking in 2010 of Indonesia's priorities in defense cooperation with India, Defense Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro named human resource development in the defense sector, India's expertise in training of Su-class aircraft pilots, counterinsurgency operations, and network-centric warfare, as well as training in UN peacekeeping operations and humanitarian disaster relief.[138] During President Yudhoyono's second visit to India in 2011, the two countries

[136] The most noteworthy Jemaah Islamiyah operative publicly reported as having spent time with al Qaeda leadership figures in Pakistan was Ridwan Issamuddin, a.k.a. Hambali, who was captured in Thailand in 2003 (Blank, 2013); Hambali's brother, Rusman Gunawan, was arrested in Karachi a few weeks after Hambali's capture.

[137] Pankaj Jha, "India's Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," 2011, pp. 55–56.

[138] P. S. Suryanarayana, "Indonesia to 'Learn' from India's Defence Sector," *The Hindu*, June 18, 2010.

agreed to enhance their security cooperation by establishing an India-Indonesia defense dialogue mechanism at the highest level.[139]

As an archipelagic country bridging the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia has an acute interest in maritime security. The two navies conduct annual India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrols in the Six Degree Channel in the Andaman Sea, and have a longstanding working relationship fostered through exercises and regular coordinated patrols conducted twice a year for two to three weeks. The two navies also engage in intelligence sharing on matters pertaining to maritime security, particularly with regard to antipiracy operations.[140]

Counterterrorism remains a security priority for both countries, with a weakened Jemaah Islamiyah far from the only potential threat. India and Indonesia signed an MoU establishing a joint working group on counterterrorism in 2004. The two armies have conducted joint counterinsurgency training exercises called Garuda Shakti. In April 2012, Indonesian army personnel participated in a platoon-level joint training exercise conducted at the Indian Army's elite Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School in Mizoram, northeastern India.[141]

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief

Indonesia has been the recipient of more Indian disaster efforts than perhaps any nation outside of South Asia. The provision of HA/DR by Indian military aircraft and naval vessels began with the 2004 tsunami, which wreaked its greatest damage on the Indonesian province of Aceh. Despite having itself suffered from the tsunami, India sent two ships: the 45-bed hospital ship INS *Nirupak* and the INS *Khukri*. An Indian medical team and 250 troops were deployed at Meulaboh beginning January 5, 2005; they distributed more than 35 tons of relief supplies, including tents, blankets, food, and medical equipment.[142] Indian sources tend to recall this operation with great pride, while

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[139] Rajeev Sharma, "Closer Defense Ties Between India and Indonesia a Win-Win Scenario," *Jakarta Globe*, October 17, 2012.

[140] "India, Indonesia to Boost Anti-Piracy Cooperation," *Sify News*, January 10, 2011.

[141] Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2012b.

[142] "India Sends 250 Troops, Medical Team to Aceh," *Jakarta Post*, January 13, 2005.

Indonesian sources are more likely to view India as merely one among dozens of nations providing assistance.[143]

The following year, India launched Operation Marham to provide HA/DR to victims of an earthquake near Yogyakarta. The effort included the Indian naval vessels INS Rajput and INS Tabar and at least two IAF transport aircraft with more than 35 tons of relief supplies.[144]

Balancer for China

Just as India's security and economic relationship with Malaysia can be viewed as a downsized version of its relationship with Singapore, India's engagement with Indonesia can look a bit like a downsized version of its ties to Malaysia. This is particularly true in the triangular strategic balance among India, China, and Southeast Asian states.

Like Malaysia, Indonesia sees Beijing's hand in the most traumatic event of its postcolonial history: a 1965 coup attempt attributed to the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), which Indonesia's military elite blamed on Maoist China. The facts of the coup—and of the subsequent crackdown in which hundreds of thousands of suspected Communists were killed—remain poorly understood, and are still seldom openly discussed in Indonesia. The fact that so many of the PKI cadres were ethnic Chinese, and that the PKI's predecessor group received funding and supplies from Maoist China, led many Indonesians to see the entire movement as a Beijing-led Fifth Column. Estimates of the

[143] One of the authors of this report visited Aceh several times in the aftermath of disaster (once while rescue missions were still under way in the week following the tsunami, once eight months later when relief efforts were in transition to reconstruction, and once several years later when reconstruction had been completed); in no case did he observe India's contribution singled out by local interlocutors—but the efforts of the United States, European states, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and other nations were all duly noted. See Jonah Blank, "Report on Official Travel to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Maldives, August 2–16, 2005," Staff Trip Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Washington, D.C.: United States Senate, filed September 27, 2005a.

[144] "New Delhi Rushing Aid to Indonesia," *The Hindu*, March 30, 2006.

dead range from the hundreds of thousands to upward of a million; 1.5 million are believed to have been detained.[145]

Also like Malaysia, Indonesia is a claimant in overlapping maritime disputes involving China. The most significant of these involves the waters north of the Natuna Islands, disputed among Indonesia, China, and Taiwan. These claims are not currently a source of as much active dispute as those put forward by Vietnam or the Philippines, however, and Indonesia has strengthened its security ties to China in recent years: Between 2008 and 2013, China had four fleet visits to Indonesia and two combined exercises. In 2011, the Indonesian military conducted a combined training exercise with the PLA focused on special operations forces. Jakarta has bought Chinese C-802 anti-ship missiles and signed an MoU to license C-705 missiles.[146]

Jakarta recognizes the importance of accommodating the strategic rise of China, but seeks to maintain a balance of power among regional players. From Indonesia's perspective, India is one of a number of potential "balancers" to help offset Beijing's huge military and economic advantages. It has sought strategic independence by deepening its relationships not only with India but to an even greater extent with the United States, Japan, and Australia.[147]

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[145] While the 1965–1966 purge unquestionably represents the most serious and widespread instance of political violence in modern Indonesian history, the basic facts—let alone a consensus on the full extent of the killings and detentions—remains elusive. For more discussion on the number killed, see Theodore Friend, *Indonesian Destinies*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 113. Number of detained: Friend, 2003, p. 113; Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 159–60; Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, p. 262.

[146] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, pp. 12, 15–16. For C-802 and C-705 missiles: Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto, "Indonesia's Fast Attack Craft Acquisition: Toward a 'Balanced' Fleet?" Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, RSIS Commentary No. 56, April 2, 2012a.

[147] Rizal Sukma, "Indonesia's Security Outlook, Defence Policy, and Regional Cooperation," in *Asia Pacific Countries' Security Outlook and Its Implications for the Defense Sector*, National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, NIDS Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, p. 22; Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto, "Indonesia's South China Sea Dilemma: Between Neutrality and Self-Interest," Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, RSIS Commentary No. 126, July 12, 2012b.

Philippines

India has limited security and economic interaction with the Philippines (see Figure 4.15). The relationship can be expected to strengthen on both fronts. On the security side, India's stake in the South China Sea may lead to increased involvement with the Philippines. On the economic side, Indian companies' search for new markets and new sources for information technology/back-office labor may spur interest in the English-fluent labor market in the Philippines.

The Philippines received Indian cultural influence only indirectly, and although Philippine president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo cited "ancient ties" between the two countries in her 2007 visit to India,[148] traces of such influence lie buried beneath subsequent levels of Islamic, Spanish, and American rule. There is a small Indian community of 50,000 to 60,000 in the Philippines, largely composed of educated professionals working for international agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and companies operating in the business process outsourcing sector.[149]

Connectivity

The Philippines do not factor significantly into Indian plans for regional connectivity. India has an interest in safe navigation through the sea lanes in and around the islands that make up the Philippines,

Figure 4.15
Summary of India's Engagement with the Philippines

NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.

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[148] Michael Lim Ubac, "Arroyo Cites Ancient Philippines-India Ties," *The Inquirer* (Philippines), October 6, 2007.

[149] Jofelle Tesorio, "Indian Community in the Philippines: Patterns and Perceptions," blog, March 23, 2013.

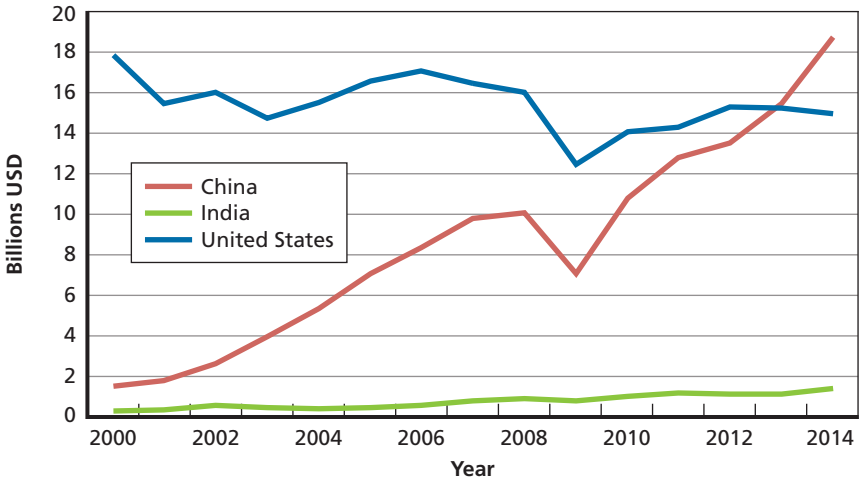
but has taken little concrete action toward helping secure maritime connectivity.

There are no direct air links between India and the Philippines.

Trade

Bilateral trade between India and the Philippines nearly doubled between 2009 and 2014, but at an extremely low volume: After this 100-percent increase, trade in 2014 was less than $1.5 billion; during the same period, China's trade with the Philippines skyrocketed from $7 billion to $18.7 billion (see Figure 4.16). India accounts for only a small proportion of the Philippines' overall external trade volume.[150] Industrial manufactures are the Philippines' main exports to India,

Figure 4.16
Philippines Trade with India, China, and the United States (USD billions)



SOURCE: International Monetary Fund, 2013.

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[150] It represents less than 1.4 percent of a $110-billion trade in 2011. See FICCI ASEAN Team, "Philippines," undated.

with water buffalo meat also a significant export. India's largest exports to the Philippines are foodstuffs and industrial manufactures.[151]

Bilateral FDI in each other's markets remains low. In 2010, India accounted for only 0.9 percent of total FDI in the Philippines.[152] The expansion of Indian-owned business process outsourcing companies in the Philippines suggests a potential for future growth. As of 2012, there were 24 such companies.[153]

India and the Philippines have signed a number of bilateral economic agreements and MoUs aimed at avoidance of double taxation, prevention of fiscal evasion, promotion and protection of investments, and cooperation in agriculture and related fields. The India-Philippine Joint Business Council enables commercial interactions between the private businesses of the two countries.[154]

Energy

The Philippines does not possess sufficient energy resources to be a significant factor in India's search for reliable new supplies. The Philippines' existing resources, and those to which it might gain access if South China Sea disputes are settled amicably, are likely to be devoted to domestic consumption.

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[151] Water buffalo meat, sometimes called "carabeef," is an important import to India: The slaughter of cows (sometimes water buffalo as well) is illegal in several Indian states, and the consumption of cow meat is taboo for almost all observant Hindus. However, this prohibition does not always apply to carabeef. For trade figures, see Joefe B. Santarita, "India Matters: A Philippine Perspective on 'Rising India," Asian Center, University of the Philippines, August 22, 2012.

[152] What FDI exists is concentrated in textiles, chemicals, and information technology. Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board, "Foreign Direct Investments Fourth Quarter 2010."

[153] Santarita, 2012.

[154] Embassy of the Philippines, "Philippine-Indian Relations: An Overview." For more detail on transition of Indian BPO to the Philippines, see Dennis Posadas, "Outsourcing: The Philippines vs. China and India," *Businessweek*, January 5, 2009; and "As Call Center Work Moves to Philippines, India Focuses on Non-Voice BPO," *Global Delivery Report*, February 6, 2013.

Institutions/Diplomacy

India and the Philippines are slowly creating a relationship without much foundation in the past. There had been little direct contact prior to the Cold War, and nearly as little during it. Even after the closure of U.S. bases in the Philippines in 1992, Manila's foreign policy orientation continued to be shaped by the defense relationship with the United States and its membership in ASEAN. When Philippine president Macapagal-Arroyo visited India in 2007, the first visit by a Philippine head of state to India in a decade, she declared that the purpose of her trip was "boosting languishing trade and political ties."[155]

Security Cooperation

The first India-Philippines Security Dialogue was held in Manila on March 12, 2004.[156] An agreement flowing from this dialogue called for greater interaction between the two militaries, information exchange, and training of Philippine military personnel in India. A Philippines-India Joint Defense Cooperation Committee held its first session in Manila in January 2012.[157]

Indian-Philippine defense cooperation has been strongest in the naval sphere. The Philippines participates in MILAN exercises. Indian naval ships have made regular visits to the Philippines since 2001. Five Indian Navy ships, including a frigate and two destroyers, visited Manila in 2004.[158] In May 2012, an Indian Eastern Fleet Task Force of four warships visited Subic Bay en route to the northeastern Pacific.[159] Intelligence exchange meetings have been held since 2002. In other

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[155] Quoted in Anushree Bhattacharya, "Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's Visit to India," New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, October 17, 2007.

[156] Chester B. Cabalza, "Philippines-India: Making Impressive Strides in Strengthening Ties," *NDCP Policy Brief No. 7*, National Defense College of the Philippines, March 16, 2013.

[157] ASEAN-India Communications Office, "India-Philippines Relations," December 2012.

[158] Cabalza, 2013.

[159] Ajaya Kumar Das, ed., *India-ASEAN Defence Relations*, Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Monograph No. 28, 2008, pp. 265, 274.

areas, defense cooperation has been less robust. There are no significant Indian transfers of arms or military technology to the Philippines.

Counterterrorism is an area of potential future cooperation. Both countries have suffered from insurgency and terrorism, sometimes from associated groups. The Abu Sayyaf Group, long active in the southern Philippine territories of Basilan, Jolo, and Zamboanga, has links to al Qaeda and other groups that have carried out attacks on Indian targets. The two nations have agreed to work together on counterterrorist operations and intelligence sharing.[160]

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief

The Philippines is not a first-tier HA/DR partner for India: Unlike Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, it does not share Indian Ocean weather patterns, and it is too far distant for India to serve as a convenient launching point for first international response. India did, however, deploy a military aircraft to assist the Philippines in recovery efforts following severe mudslides on the island of Leyte in February 2006. An IAF Illyushin-76 carried 34 tons of relief supplies, including tents, blankets, food, and medicine.[161]

Balancer for China

The Philippines has a closer economic relationship with China than do other maritime Southeast Asian states: Chinese FDI flows represent 14 percent of inflow to the Philippines, compared with 1.5 percent for Indonesia and 1.8 percent for Malaysia and 2.9 percent for Singapore.[162] At the same time, the Philippines has a larger range of territorial disputes with China than any nation in Southeast Asia except for Vietnam. These disputes include conflicting claims in the South China Sea, including the Spratly Islands and Scarborough Shoal; in the Luzon Strait, including other waters surrounding the Philippines

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[160] Vibhanshu Shekhar, "India-Philippines Relations: An Overview," IPCS Special Report, New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, June 2007.

[161] "IAF Illyushin-76 Carrying Relief Supplies to Philippines," Bharat-Rakshak.com, February 22, 2006.

[162] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 12.

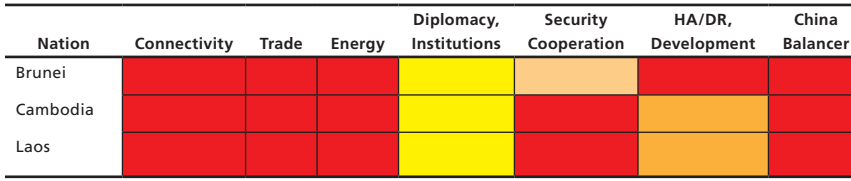
core islands; in the waters north of Borneo; and other waters inside the "Nine-Dash Line." As the weaker party, the Philippines seeks to internationalize these dispute and to engage outside powers such as India.[163] This wrangling, however, has not prevented the Philippines from welcoming four visits by the PLA Navy in the five years through 2013.[164] India has shown less interest in inserting itself into South China Sea disputes on behalf of the Philippines than it has on behalf of Vietnam, but it shares the Philippines' core demand that all territorial disputes be settled through negotiation rather than intimidation—a point that resonates with India as it faces Chinese territorial claims in the Indian states of Arunachal Pradash and Jammu and Kashmir.

Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos

The remaining three ASEAN members have fairly limited engagement with India by all metrics discussed (see Figure 4.17).

Brunei has a security and economic relationship with India proportionate to its small size. The nation's energy reserves are of interest to India, and Brunei's current position as ASEAN chair is likely to provide a short-term boost to the relationship. Brunei participated in India's MILAN multilateral naval exercise in 2012, but does not have

Figure 4.17
India's Engagement with Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos



NOTE: Color coding is on a spectrum where red indicates a low level of engagement; yellow, moderate engagement; and dark green, a significant level of engagement.

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[163] Scott, 2013, p. 53. The Philippines has taken the issue to the International Court of Justice: "Philippines to Bring Scarborough Shoal Row to International Court," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 14, 2012.

[164] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 12.

deep security ties. There are no significant points of friction, but neither country figures very prominently into the other's calculations.

The two small nations of Cambodia and Laos have a historical cultural bond with India; the Hindu Khmer empire, which lasted from the ninth through the 14th century, was centered in Cambodia's sacred city of Angkor and extended well into Laos. These two modern states, however, remain more closely linked to China than any other members of ASEAN: In 2010, for example, China accounted for 60 percent of the FDI inflow to Cambodia and 89 percent to Laos.[165] These states have only very limited security interaction with India,[166] and hardly more extensive economic relations. Connectivity plans are a distant dream. But India's small-scale engagement provides the United States with a free, if modest, benefit: New Delhi has funded English-language education programs in both countries.

Conclusion

India's bilateral relations with the nations of Southeast Asia are illustrative of one of this report's main observations: India's bold rhetoric and ambitious goals for engagement with Southeast Asia have generally not yet been matched by concrete action. A country-by-country examination provides granular detail (as shown in Figure 4.1), showing where India has had relatively more or less success in meeting its goals.

This brief overview of India's bilateral relationships in Southeast Asia suggests certain areas in which Washington and New Delhi might cooperate to their mutual advantage. In geographical terms, these include:

Vietnam: India's longstanding security relationship can complement U.S. efforts to deepen ties with its former adversary. Given Vietnam's heavy reliance on Russian- or Soviet-model military platforms,

[165] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 12.

[166] Laos signed a defense cooperation agreement with India in 2002, but the impact has been limited. According to a former Indian defense attaché in Vietnam, Laotian officers have been trained at Indian facilities. Interview with retired Indian Army flag officer, 2013.

India may be better positioned than the United States to upgrade and maintain Vietnamese hardware. New Delhi and Washington would like to boost their respective trade with Vietnam (and hence share an interest in facilitating the improvement of Vietnam's rule of law and transportation infrastructure), and both support Vietnam's desire to improve its capacity for self-defense and protection of maritime trade routes. If India's dream of a Kolkata-to-Hanoi road and rail connection were realized, Vietnam's additional economic and logistical options would be increased (i.e., the country would be less reliant on Chinese goodwill), and U.S. trade and security interests would be enhanced.

Myanmar: The United States and India likewise share complementary economic and security interests in Myanmar: China's influence here is far heavier than in Vietnam, and both the government and the population of this fragile nation are seeking alternate sources of support. Here, perhaps more than in any other nation, the United States could benefit from significantly increased Indian engagement. As a neighboring state, a potential geostrategic counterweight to China, and a country with considerable shared history and culture, India is well positioned to join the international rush into a populous, resource-rich nation that has been largely cut off from foreign engagement since 1962. Unlike the United States, India does not prompt suspicions of superpower encroachment. China remains the primary economic and military sponsor of the Burmese regime, and North Korea is still an interested player: U.S. interests are well served by greater Indian involvement.

Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia: In these three nations, India's interests are largely shared by the United States, so either nation's engagement can serve as a force multiplier for the other. More so than in Vietnam and Myanmar, however, the two nations' strengths (and weaknesses) replicate rather than complement each other. Muslim-majority Malaysia and Indonesia (and, to a lesser extent, Brunei) may be affected by events in the Middle East: If a U.S.-led campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Iraq and Syria is seen in the same light as the 2003 U.S. campaign against Saddam Hussain or U.S. support for Israel in its 2008, 2012, or 2014 invasions of Gaza, relations could take a negative turn. In such a case, however, India under

the leadership of Narendra Modi would be poorly placed to pick up the slack. India is not bound by the legal strictures that could limit U.S. security cooperation with Thailand if the military regime proves unwilling to return power to a freely elected civilian government, but the May 2014 coup has done little to disrupt the relationship at the time of writing.

CHAPTER FIVE

Is Southeast Asia an Arena for Sino-Indian Rivalry?

Most nations in Southeast Asia welcome India's engagement—indeed, they see India as a potentially invaluable balancer for China. This does not imply that Southeast Asian states necessarily regard China as a threat. Most see more benefits than challenges coming from Chinese engagement with the region, and no country in ASEAN would like to decrease trade with China or discourage China's investment in local economies. But most Southeast Asian states are wary of Chinese political and military assertiveness. India is seen as a possible counterweight to such involvement, a rising power able to help prevent Chinese engagement from veering into Chinese domination. Indian Prime Minister Modi has toed a similar line: He has sharply criticized Beijing's territorial adventurism against his own nation but the first congratulatory phone call he chose to receive after his inauguration was from his Chinese protocol counterpart Li Keqiang; in this call, Modi made a point of inviting China's paramount leader, President Xi Jinping, to visit India. This trip took place just four months later, and it is worth noting that Modi hosted Xi in his home state of Gujarat.[1]

Singapore's former prime minister Goh Chok Tong has referred to ASEAN as a jumbo jet with one wing provided by China and the other by India.[2] But the wings on this jet aren't anywhere near balanced: China far overshadows India in FDI, trade, military sales, tour-

[1] Jayanth Jacob and Sutirtho Patranobis, "Diplomacy Drive On, PM Sets His Sights on China," *Hindustan Times*, May 29, 2014.

[2] Chua, 2002.

ist visits—indeed, in most quantifiable metrics (see Figure 5.1). In what sense, then, can India and China be said to be engaged in a rivalry?

Despite the clear disparity in the two nations' economic and military capabilities, India is not without resources of its own. If faced with what it regards as Chinese provocation, either on its shared borders or against its interests in Southeast Asia, India could respond with a wide range of diplomatic, economic, and military countermeasures. Such measures might include more aggressively asserting its territorial claims to lands currently held by China (including the Himalayan territory of Aksai Chin); explicitly supporting the claims of Vietnam, Malay-

Figure 5.1
Engagement of China and India with Southeast Asia

China

Foreign direct investment
$8.6 billion (2013)
= 6.6 times as large

Trade
$350 billion (2013)
= 5.1 times as large

Tourist visas
9.2 million (2012)
= 3.3 times as many

Military sales
$1.6 billion (2000–2013)
= 116 times as much

India

Foreign direct investment
$1.3 billion (2013)

Trade
$68 billion (2013)

Tourist visas
2.8 million (2012)

Military sales
$14 million (2000–2013)

SOURCES: FDI: ASEAN, "Table 26: ASEAN Foreign Direct Investments, Net Inflow from Selected Partner Countries/Regions," *Foreign Direct Investment Statistics*, August 1, 2014c. Trade: ASEAN, "Table 19: ASEAN Trade by Selected Partner Country/Region, 2013," *External Trade Statistics*, July 24, 2014b. Tourist arrivals: ASEAN, "Table 30: Top Ten Country/Regional Sources of Visitors to ASEAN," *Tourism Statistics*, January 31, 2014a.
NOTE: China sold arms to six nations (Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia), while India sold only to Myanmar. Additionally, China sold more arms during the 1990s to just two nations ($1.6 billion to Myanmar and $1.1 billion to Thailand) than it sold to all of Southeast Asia in the years since.

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sia, the Philippines, Brunei, and perhaps even Taiwan in their disputes with Beijing involving territories in the South China Sea; increasing its development of strategic infrastructure projects in Southeast Asia, including the refurbishment of Myanmar's port of Sittwe; increasing sales of Indian-produced military equipment, as well as Indian maintenance and refurbishment of Russian/Soviet-model military equipment, to nations including Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Indonesia; covertly supporting asymmetrical warfare within China, including dormant but potentially viable indigenous movements in Tibet; and forward-deploying a variety of offensive air and naval assets to the Andaman and Nicobar Island bases.

China's Strategic Interests and Activities in Southeast Asia[3]

China's interests in and relations with the states of Southeast Asia vary greatly from country to country. The states immediately neighboring China tend to have more active trade relationships with the regional economic powerhouse—but these states also are generally those with the most active territorial disputes. While most regional states have become relatively more concerned about the direction of Chinese power, that is particularly true in northern Southeast Asia—China's closest geographical neighbors, especially Vietnam and the Philippines. The only economically and militarily robust state in the northern tier with which China has a strong relationship is Thailand: Laos and Cambodia are close, but relatively weak, and Myanmar is both weak and in a period of relationship transition.

China has more opportunities for friendly major-state relations in the southern tier of Southeast Asia, where economic interests are not counterbalanced as directly by territorial conflict. And despite a degree of historical distrust on the part of Indonesia and Malaysia, China has made some inroads with those states in military-to-military relations;

[3] This section draws from previous RAND Project AIR FORCE work on U.S. and China's role in Southeast Asia. See Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 12.

in the case of Indonesia, it has also made limited headway in military industrial ties.

While some Southeast Asian nations tend to see China as a rapidly expanding would-be hegemon, China sees itself playing far more defense than offense. Beijing seeks to create a stable and secure environment on its periphery that will serve as a strategic buffer zone and allow the nation to focus on economic growth.[4] China's historical emphasis has been on maintaining strong relations with its neighbors and near-neighbors in mainland Southeast Asia. For most of the decade following the Mischief Reef incident in 1994–1995, Beijing generally pursued a policy of reassurance to improve relations and advance its political objectives in Southeast Asia.[5]

Views of China throughout Southeast Asia took a negative turn by 2010, as Beijing asserted its claims in the South China Sea in reaction to perceptions of greater Southeast Asian efforts to challenge Chinese claims.[6] China defines most of the South China Sea as its territory and has clashed with the Philippines and Vietnam over the Spratly and Paracel Islands. Malaysia and Brunei also dispute China's claim over several Spratly reefs. Though Indonesia does not have any island or reef disputes with China, Chinese claims in the South China Sea challenge Indonesia's control over the waters adjacent to the island of Natuna, the site of Indonesia's largest offshore gas field.[7]

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[4] Bronson Percival, *The Dragon Looks South: China and Southeast Asia in the New Century*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007; Thomas Lum, Wayne Morrison, and Bruce Vaughn, *China's 'Soft Power' in Southeast Asia*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 4, 2008; Ian Storey, *Southeast Asia and the Rise of China: The Search for Security*, New York: Routledge, 2011.

[5] During this incident, China occupied a feature claimed by the Philippines. For detailed discussion of this and the subsequent period, see Evan Medeiros et al., *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-736-AF, 2008.

[6] M. Taylor Fravel and Michael D. Swaine, "China's Assertive Behavior—Part Two: The Maritime Periphery," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 35, 2011; Alastair Iain Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?" *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2013.

[7] Supriyanto, 2012b.

Balancing its coercive efforts to stake claims in the South China Sea, Beijing tries to exercise influence by engaging ASEAN diplomatically.[8] Multilaterally, China supports establishing a regional security architecture and free-trade agreement centered on ASEAN—the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership—that would exclude nonregional actors and serve as a counter to the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership.

In recent years, China has significantly increased trade and, to a lesser degree, military exchanges with the region. According to ASEAN statistics, Chinese merchandise trade with ASEAN increased from a mere $13 million in 1995 to nearly $290 million in 2011.[9] In 2010, China implemented a preferential trade agreement with ASEAN. The following year, China established a China-ASEAN Investment Corporation Fund, a private equity fund to invest in infrastructure, energy, and natural resources in ASEAN and China. It aims to have $10 billion in assets under management.[10]

The PLA military engagement with Southeast Asia is growing in scope and improving in quality, though it is uneven across the region. Since 2000, China has hosted seminars for ASEAN defense officials on a range of security issues. China began its first combined exercises with Southeast Asian countries in 2002 and its first combined training exercise in 2007.[11] China established a security dialogue between senior Chinese and ASEAN defense officials and experts in 2003, and

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[8] In official documents, China describes its policy as seeking "friendly and good neighborly relations" (*mulin youhao guanxi*), emphasizing "benevolence toward and partnerships with neighbors" (*yilin weishan, yulin weiban*) so as to "enrich, harmonize, and reassure the neighborhood" (*fulin, mulin, anlin*). A less benign interpretation might be that China seeks to use its influence with specific member-states to prevent ASEAN from taking a unified approach toward territorial disputes. An example of such action would be the 2012 Phnom Penh summit, at which Cambodia blocked a joint communiqué referring to the South China Sea disputes.

[9] ASEAN Merchandise Trade Statistical Database, *ASEAN-India Eminent Persons' Report to the Leaders*, Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, October 2012.

[10] Daniel Ten Kate, "Asean Reaps Rewards as Clinton Counters China: Southeast Asia," *Bloomberg*, July 9, 2012.

[11] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, p. 13.

began participating in the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus that brings together defense ministers from ASEAN countries and its dialogue partners to focus on regional security issues in 2010.[12] China is also pursuing defense industrial cooperation with at least three countries: Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand.[13] Various types of Chinese military engagement with ASEAN countries have become routine.

While participating in ASEAN institutions, China tries to secure its claims on South China Sea issues. China has catered to the ASEAN chairman and selected ASEAN countries to push its agenda. When Cambodia held ASEAN's chair in 2012, for example, it served China's interest by shutting down discussion of the South China Sea territorial dispute at that year's East Asia Summit.[14] In 2013, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi utilized his first visit abroad to travel to Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei. He avoided the Philippines and Vietnam—the two countries China is locked in dispute with—to press China's maritime claims most strenuously. China has attempted to strengthen relations with Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia, in large part to assure itself that ASEAN's center of gravity will not fall on the side of Southeast Asian nations challenging Beijing's maritime claims. Wang's visit to Brunei fits the same pattern: This tiny state, with modest maritime claims of its own, will be influential in setting the agenda at ASEAN conferences as the chair for 2013.[15]

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[12] Ian Storey, "China's Bilateral Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," *Asian Security*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2012, p. 292.

[13] Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, pp. 15–16.

[14] Kathrin Hille, Ben Bland, and Geoff Dyer, "U.S. and China View for Influence in SE Asia," *Financial Times*, November 23 2012.

[15] "Foreign Media: China's New Foreign Minister's First Tour of Four Asean Countries Draws Attention" *[Waimei: Zhongguo Xin Waizhang Shoufang Dongmeng Siguo Yin Guanzhu], Xinhua News*, May 2, 2013.

How Does China Regard India's Presence in Southeast Asia?

China sees India's engagement with Southeast Asia through the lens of its larger world view. Far from being a threat to regional harmony, China sees *itself* as under pressure from a number of sides. Where China's neighbors see a rising power growing stronger day by day, China sees itself facing challenges on its periphery that have the potential to limit its rise.

In Northeast Asia, China sees Japan displaying new assertiveness on the issue of the Diaoyu Islands (to Japan, the Senkakus). Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has downplayed such World War II atrocities as the "Rape of Nanjing,"[16] and is regarded in China as being dismissive of his nation's brutal history in the first half of the twentieth century. Japan launched its largest military vessel since World War II in August 2013—officially described as a helicopter-carrying destroyer, suspected of being convertible for use by fixed-wing strike aircraft.[17] With the United States as its firm treaty ally and an ability to acquire an advanced nuclear capability in a very short time if it ever made the political decision to do so,[18] Japan presents China with a potential threat.

On its northeastern border, China sees a very different threat in its volatile neighbor North Korea. Technically an ally, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is the type of friend that makes enemies superfluous. It is a regime with an exceptionally high tolerance of risk, to outward appearances perpetually on the brink of either launching a disastrous war or succumbing to a domestic implosion. In either of these scenarios, China could face millions of refugees flooding across its border, and Beijing could be forced to intervene in direct conflict with both South Korea and the United States.

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[16] Takehiko Kambayashi, "In Japan, Denial over Nanjing Still Holds Sway After 70 Years," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 14, 2007.

[17] Brad Lendon, "Japan Launches Largest Warship Since World War II," CNN.com, August 7, 2013.

[18] Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Country Profiles: Japan," online, accessed September 24, 2013.

To the southeast, Taiwan remains a neuralgic issue for Beijing. Though cross-Strait relations have improved considerably in recent years, Taipei still stakes out independent foreign and domestic policy positions that do not always align with Beijing. If Taipei decides to declare independence, Beijing could be confronted with a situation potentially requiring significant military and political assets. A conflict over Taiwan would risk drawing in the United States on Taiwan's side against China.

To the West, the restive Muslim population of China's far-flung Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region causes Beijing great concern. While China's Muslims are estimated to number only between 10 million and 20 million, they account for around 40 percent of the population of China's largest province.[19] Ethnic violence is a recurring issue in Xinjiang, threatening social stability and China's national unity. Xinjiang also borders five Muslim-majority countries, including such hotbeds of radical Islamist movements as Afghanistan and Pakistan.[20] To outsiders, China's reaction to small groups like the East Turkestan Islamic Movement may seem overblown—but to Party leaders any potential threat to stability is a cause for worry.[21]

To the Himalayan south, Tibet is a continual source of concern. Over the four years through 2013, there were at least 100 cases of monks and ordinary citizens performing self-immolation to highlight grievances, bringing the issue a renewed prominence on the

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[19] According to China's 2000 census figures, Uighurs represented 41 percent of the country's Muslim population (8.4 million), while the Hui ethnic group represented 48 percent (9.8 million); other significant Muslim ethnic groups include Kazakhs (6.1 percent, or 1.25 million) and Dongxiang (2.5 percent, 514,000). In Xinjiang, however, Uighurs represent the predominant non-Han group, and composed a solid majority of the province's population before Beijing's program of Sinification. Many observers would argue that unrest in this enormous region is due to Beijing's own heavy-handed policies. For discussion of China's Muslim populations and citation of figures above, see Jackie Armijo, "Islamic Education in China," *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 2006.

[20] Preeti Bhattacharji, *Backgrounder: Uighers and China's Xinjiang Region*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, May 29, 2012.

[21] "China Claims Foreign Terrorists Are Linked to Xinjiang Violence," Bloomberg.com, July 1, 2013.

world stage.[22] Chinese leaders see the Dalai Lama as an instigator of Tibetan separatism despite his statements to the contrary, and they see India as aiding the Tibetan cause both by supporting the Dalai Lama and hosting the community-in-exile in Dharamsala. Some Chinese leaders see an increased threat of unrest arising after the 80-year-old Dalai Lama passes from the stage, with any successor favored by Beijing unlikely to be seen as legitimate; another potential movement leader, the Karmapa Lama, resides in Dharamsala and has his traditional seat at the Rumtek monastery in the Indian territory of Sikkim.[23]

Also along China's southern Himalayan border, and directly related to the question of Tibet, India itself poses a challenge on two fronts: Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh. Both Ladakh (part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir) and Tawang (part of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh) have far stronger cultural and historical ties with Tibet than with lowland India.[24] In both sites, a majority of the local population practices Tibetan Buddhism, and does so more freely than do their coreligionists in Tibet itself. The stakes for China are high in both places: From China's perspective, any acceptance of Indian claims on "Tibetan" territory could weaken Beijing's own claims on Tibet proper. China occupied Arunachal in its 1962 war

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[22] Edward Wong and Jim Yardley, "100th Self-Immolation Reported Inside Tibet," *New York Times*, February 14, 2013.

[23] There are two claimants to the title of Karmapa Lama: Ogyen Trinley Dorje is supported by the Dalai Lama, and by the monks of Rumtek monastery (also, for now at least, by Beijing); his rival, Trinley Thaye Dorje, is recognized by Shamar Rinpoche (a dominant lama in the Karma Kagyu school), and by the religious trust that was set up to manage Rumtek. Due to the division between Rumtek's monks and its trust, the rivals are both living far from the monastery while the legal case works its way through Indian courts: Ogyen Trinley Dorje in Dharamsala, Trinley Thaye Dorje in the West Bengal hill-station of Kalimpong.

[24] For discussion of Ladakh's place in the Kashmir controversy, see Blank, 1999, pp. 40–41, 51, 36–53. China's claim to Tawang and other Buddhist enclaves in Arunachal Pradesh rests on its claim to Tibet as a whole. Under the Simla Accord of 1914, the government of Tibet ceded these areas to British India; China has never recognized this demarcation—called the McMahon Line, after British negotiator Sir Henry McMahon. For more discussion of the roots of the Sino-Indian dispute over Tawang and other parts of Arunachal Pradesh, see Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line: A Study in Political History*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

with India; although it withdrew its troops after the cessation of hostilities, it has never accepted Indian sovereignty over Tawang and other disputed areas.[25] On the Ladakh front, the PLA in April 2013 sent a small force to camp out 17 miles behind the line of India's claimed sovereignty, and withdrew only after weeks of diplomatic pressure. Prior to his assuming office, Prime Minister Modi articulated unyielding positions on both territorial disputes.[26]

Finally, in Southeast Asia, China sees an array of small states asserting claims over maritime territory that Beijing considers its own. China would prefer to resolve its disputes diplomatically, but fears that if tensions do escalate into a conflict, external actors—such as the United States—may aid other South China Sea dispute claimants. China is increasingly competing for influence with the United States in Myanmar, a country traditionally in Beijing's orbit. Close U.S. allies such as Japan—and to some extent, South Korea—are also reaching out to Southeast Asia. There is concern that the growing role of external powers in Southeast Asia may hinder and limit China's rise and regional influence.

From this perspective, China is cautious of increased Indian engagement in Southeast Asia.

Concerns of Potential Encirclement Do Not Drive Chinese Policy

As a matter of policy rather than perception, however, China has generally taken a more sanguine view of India's role in Southeast Asia:

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[25] At the time, the territory was known in India as the North-East Frontier Agency. It was renamed Arunachal in 1972, and granted statehood in the Indian Union in 1987.

[26] In February 2014, at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh, Modi said, "China should shed its expansionist policy . . . Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India and will always remain so. No power can snatch it from us." (Cited in "Modi in Arunachal: China Should Shed Expansionist Mindset," *Times of India*, February 22, 2014.) In December 2013, at a rally in Jammu, Modi and BJP president Rajnath Singh (now Modi's powerful Minister of Home Affairs) lambasted Prime Minister Singh's decision to sign a border security agreement with China after the April 2013 PLA incursion at Daulat Beg Oldie in India's state of Jammu and Kashmir. Masood Hussain, "BJP Blasts UPA's China Policy," *Economic Times*, December 2, 2013.

despite China's fear of potential encirclement, Chinese theorists do not appear to consider current Indian activities as posing a genuine strategic threat.[27]

On the driving issue of South China Sea disputes, China sees India's policy as half-hearted, driven by a complex set of factors, and still so malleable as to provide great potential for being shaped to Beijing's liking. More broadly, India is perceived to be opportunistically utilizing America's Asian rebalance to expand its own regional and global influence—an unwelcome development, from Beijing's standpoint, but not necessarily more than an irritant. Chinese policy-shapers see India's primary strategic goal as retaining dominance over South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, with expansion into Southeast Asia as a distant second. China, however, is already far more active in the South Asia/Indian Ocean region than India is in Southeast Asia, so the contest is taking place (to use a metaphor not tied to either nation) on the other team's 30-yard line.

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[27] A sample of Chinese articles surveyed in this section include: Fang Xiaozhi, "India's Strategic Motivations and Development Potential for Becoming Involved in the South China Sea" [Shilun Yindu Jieru Nanhai Wenti De Zhanlue Dongyin Ji Fazhan Qianjing], *Peace and Development [Heping Yu Fazhan]*, No. 6, 2012; Zeng Xiangyu and Guo Hong, "Look East Policy Meets Rebalancing to Asia: U.S.-Indian Security Exchanges in the Asia-Pacific" [Dongxiang Zhengce Zaoyu Zhong fan Yatai: Mei-yin zai Yatai Diqu de Anquan Hudong], *South Asian Studies Quarterly [Nanya Yanjiu Jikan]*, No. 4, 2012; Bian Shaolan, "India's Soft Power in Southeast Asia" [Lun Yindu Zai Dongnanya De Ruanshili], *Southeast Asian Studies [Dongnanya Yanjiu]*, No. 3, 2012; Yang Xiaoping and Wu Zhaoli, *India's Asia-Pacific Strategy and Prospects [Yindu De Yatai Zhanlue Jiqi Qianjing]*, Beijing, China: National Institute of International Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2013; Li Zhang, "India's Look East and China's Countermeasures" [Yindu Dongxiang Zhanlue: Jinzhan, Yingxiang Ji Yingdui], *South Asian Studies Quarterly [Nanya Yanjiu Jikan]*, No. 1, 2012; Ge Hongliang, "India's Role in the South China Sea Dispute" [Yindu Zai Nanhai Wenti Zhong De Jiaose Tantao], *South Asian Studies Quarterly [Nanya Yanjiu Jikan]*, No. 1, 2012; Zhao Gancheng, "India's Look-East Policy: Development and Significance" [Yindu "Dongxiang" Zhengce De Fazhan Ji Yiyi], *Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies [Dangdai Yaitai]*, No. 8, 2007; "Bluebook: China-India Relations Key to Determining Future Indian Ocean Strategy" [Lanpishu: Zhongyin Guanxi Shi Jueding Weilai Yinduhai Zhanlue Geju Guanjian], *Caijing News*, June 19, 2013. [Note on transcriptions: The articles were reviewed in original Chinese, but the transcription of titles and authors' names are given here in the English version provided by the journals' English editions themselves; typographical errors have been corrected, but otherwise RAND has not sought to impose its own style on these journal citations.]

On the economic front, India remains far from presenting a genuine challenge to Chinese commercial activities in Southeast Asia (see Figure 5.2). In the three most economically important nations of the region—indeed, for India's largest regional trading partners—the contest is not even close. As former Singaporean diplomat Kishore Mahbubani puts it, "China promises more than India does—and over-delivers. India promises less—and under-delivers."[28]

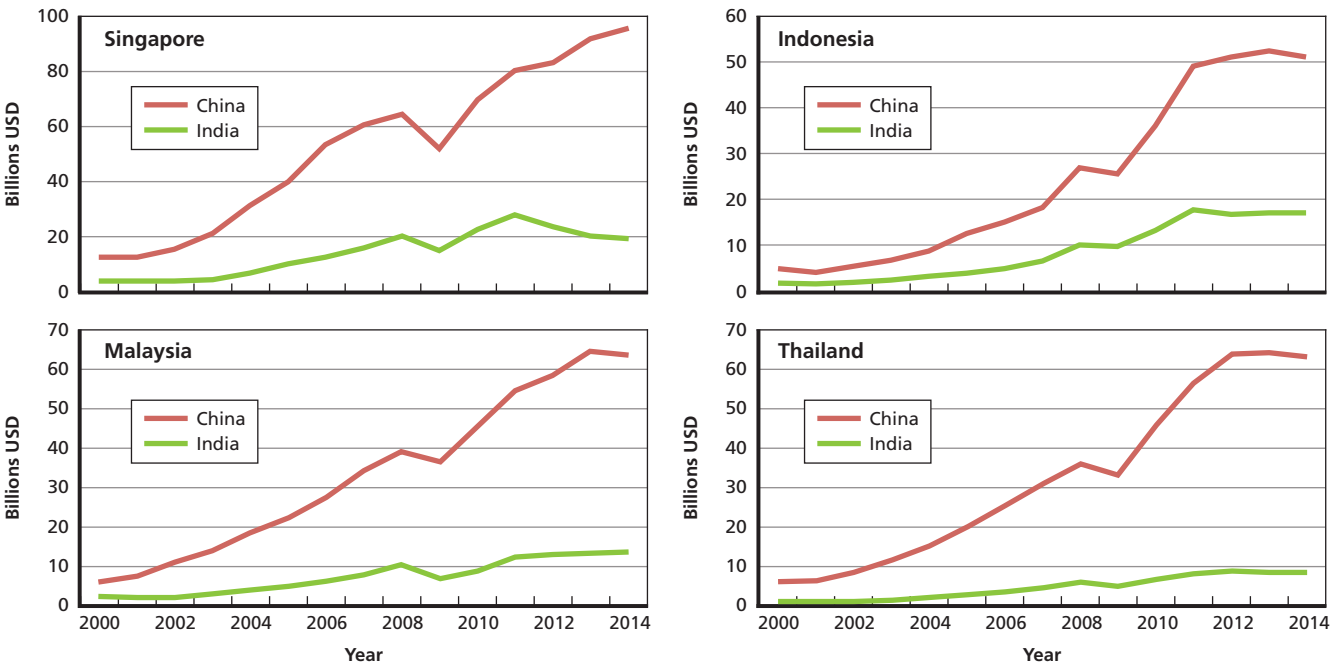
Interestingly, one place where Nehruvian ideals are still taken seriously is Beijing. Most Chinese strategists see India's strategic culture of nonalignment, as well as its self-conception as a rising great power, as a strong barrier to Delhi forging an anti-Chinese alliance with the United States. Chinese theorists see any potential U.S.-India alliance as inevitably placing India in a subordinate position, a place they judge Delhi unwilling to go.

In a further display of policy nostalgia, Beijing appears to be resuscitating Nehru's vision of *"Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai"* (Indians and Chinese are brethren). A majority of Chinese theorists whose writings were examined for this report argued that China and India shared the primary goal of stability and security in the Southeast Asian region, and that China's interests would be served by increased security dialogue mechanisms and greater economic linkages between the two nations—as well as between the other two legs of the China-India-ASEAN triangle. Border disputes between India and China, the majority view held, should be resolved through negotiation rather than confrontation.

China's leadership, including President Xi Jinping, seems to be taking such analysis to heart. While China and India halted military exchanges in August 2010 after a diplomatic visa row, the two nations resumed military cooperation in January 2013 and planned to host three joint military exercises in 2013. In early 2013, the leadership in both countries elevated China-India relations to "one of the most

[28] Interview with Kishore Mahbubani, 2013. He also noted that at least eight of ASEAN's ten nations have closer cultural ties to India than China, but that the nation with the closest Chinese ties (apart from his own nation) was Vietnam—which had the worst relationship with Beijing.

Figure 5.2
Trade of India and China with Key Southeast Asian Nations (USD billions)



NOTE: Figures for India's largest SE Asia partners—increasing, but dwarfed by China.

RAND *RR1021-5.2*

important bilateral relationships."[29] Xi called for expanding mutual "military and security trust" and finding a mutually acceptable border dispute solution "as soon as possible."[30] Chinese strategists tend to see the April 2013 Ladakh border faceoff in rather less dire terms than their Indian counterparts: Instead of focusing on the fact that the two armies only narrowly avoided a lethal exchange, Chinese analysts note improvements in bilateral communications and crisis management.[31] In May 2013, the first foreign visit by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang was to India—widely interpreted as a gesture of great symbolic significance. Li emphasized that China and India are "natural strategic partners," and suggested that his nation should elevate bilateral economic relations to a higher level by linking China's western development policies with India's Look East policy.[32]

A Sino-Indian rapprochement may at times leave the United States as the odd player out. Beijing, for instance, offered to upgrade Iran's Chabahar Port—a facility of compelling interest to India, and one that would provide a useful intermediary point between Pakistan's Chinese-built Gwadar port and U.S.-dominated ports in the Middle East.[33] If Beijing was attempting to drive a wedge between India and the United States, the plan was at least partially successful: Delhi

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[29] "China Unveils 5-Point Formula to Improve Ties with India," *The Hindu Business Line*, March 19, 2013; Lan Jianxue, "Sino-Indian Relations: New Way of Thinking and 'Rebalancing'" [Zhongyin Guanxi Xingsiwei Yu "Zaipingheng"], *China International Studies*, No. 40, May 2013.

[30] Ananth Krishnan, "India, China Should Deepen Military Ties: Xi Jinping," *The Hindu*, March 28, 2013.

[31] Though Chinese officials attempted to characterize the standoff as accidental escalation, it was likely sanctioned by high-level government authorities in China. See Lan, 2013; "China-India Border Friction Does Not Influence Bilateral Relations" [Zhongyi Bianjie Moca Buyingxiang Liangguo Guanxi], *Sing Pao*, June 3, 2013; Manu Pubby, "Top China Army Body Says Ladakh Intrusion Was Accidental," *The Indian Express*, July 16, 2013; Minxin Pei, "Read Between the LAC," *The Indian Express*, May 11, 2013; Jayadeva Ranade, "Bordering on Bullying," *Hindustan Times*, August 2, 2013.

[32] "Li Keqiang: Joint China-India Development Will Benefit Asia and the World" [Zhongyi Liangguo Xieshou Fazhan Shi Yazhou Zhiqing Shijie Zhifu]], *China News*, May 22, 2013.

[33] China built the port of Gwadar, and currently manages it (after an intermediary period of management by Singapore). Some observers see China's overtures to Iran as evidence of

responded by calling Iran "critical" to its energy security in July 2013, and worked out an arrangement for India to continue limited purchases of Iranian oil.[34]

Chinese nonchalance regarding India's role in Asia can only go so far, and Beijing would not limit itself to diplomacy if it felt its core interests were threatened. If the carrots don't lead India to a more cooperative policy, China continues to prepare sticks, too. The April 2013 Ladakh confrontation may well have been orchestrated to remind Delhi of China's military capabilities, and the seriousness with which sovereignty and territorial issues are viewed by Beijing—a message, perhaps, as relevant to India's stance in the South China Sea as to border claims in the Himalayas.[35] Moreover, China has not slowed down its expansion of influence in India's neighborhood. In mid-2013, for example, Xi Jinping met with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, and the two countries upgraded their relationship to a strategic cooperative partnership. China signed deals to build new port facilities and operate a new container harbor near the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo; it has already built a port at Hambantota, on the other side of the small island nation. China has also been selling arms to Bangladesh and Myanmar for years, and is increasing its defense ties with the Maldives and the Seychelles.[36]

China may be more aware of India's ideological legacy than of its own: Where Indian strategists place more emphasis on the ideologies of the 1950s and 1960s than their Southeast Asian interlocutors do, Chinese strategists seem to place less. During the same years when Nehru was preaching noninterference in Southeast Asia, Maoist China was

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Indo-Chinese rivalry as well as cooperation. See Amitav Ranjan, "As China Offers to Fund Iran, India Fast-Tracks Chabahar," *The Indian Express*, July 1, 2013.

[34] For argument that this decision was due to Chinese pressure rather than Indian self-restraint, see Zachary Keck, "India and China Battle for Maritime Influence," *The Diplomat*, July 31, 2013.

[35] "China-India Border Friction Does Not Influence Bilateral Relations" [Zhong-Yin Bianjie Moca bu Yingxiang Liangguo Guanxi], 2013; Pei, 2013; Ranade, 2013.

[36] Keck, 2013. China's close relationship with Sri Lanka may be weakened by the unexpected electoral defeat of Rajapaksa in a presidential contest held January 2015.

interfering quite actively in the region's domestic politics. In Southeast Asia, Nehru's hands-off policy is not given nearly as much attention as modern analysts in India might wish—while Mao's hands-on policy is not forgotten nearly as quickly as Beijing might desire. "Most countries in Southeast Asia spent decades fighting Communist movements sponsored by China," noted a Singapore-based scholar. "Yet Chinese leaders are mystified by the continuing distrust."[37]

How Does India Regard China's Presence in Southeast Asia?

India's perspective is the mirror image of China's: It sees itself as a wholly defensive power, with no history of aggression toward its neighbors—least of all against China. India, like China, fears encirclement—and views China's support for arch-rival Pakistan and increased involvement in both South Asia and the Indian Ocean with grave concern. "The People's Republic will have an explosive breakout within a decade," predicts a retired Indian brigadier, "sending large carrier groups and nuclear subs throughout the Indian Ocean. India will have to counter this."[38] A former high-level security official shared this concern: "China feels there can be only one dominant state—and they want to be it," he said. "India is willing to coexist—but will not be pushed out."[39] For India, China "arouses unease because of its size, history, proximity, potential power—and, more importantly, the memories of the middle kingdom syndrome."[40] This focus on China has increased the importance of Southeast Asia to Indian leaders.[41]

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[37] Interview with senior scholar of Southeast Asia, 2013.

[38] Interview with retired Indian Army officer and defense analyst, 2013.

[39] Interview with former senior Indian security official.

[40] J. Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power Rivals*, New Delhi: Viva Books, 2012, p. 372.

[41] Rahul Mishra, "China in India's Southeast Asia Strategy," in Ajaya Kumar Das, ed., *India-ASEAN Defence Relations*, Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, RSIS Monograph No. 28, 2013, p. 100.

As is the case for China, this threat-focused perspective does not translate directly into policy. While China's *sangfroid* comes from confidence, India's policy restraint flows from caution: Despite its fears, Delhi remains very wary of doing anything to aggravate its powerful neighbor and largest trading partner. As the earlier chapters of this report document, India has been strengthening economic, political, and defense relations with ASEAN countries on bilateral, multilateral, and region levels—but Delhi is careful to not portray such moves as a campaign directed against China. While India signed a security pact in 2008 with Japan and is increasing its engagements with the United States and Australia, India actively avoids being seen as part of a "quadrilateral alliance" with the United States, Australia, and Japan.[42]

The highest-impact, albeit lowest-probability, scenario that India fears is all-out war. Indian policymakers are painfully aware of China's 1962 invasion. China's politics are far different in the 21st century than they were during the high-Maoist period between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, but for India, the conflict is seen as a possible predictor of future events rather than a relic of the past. The fact that China voluntarily withdrew from the territory it captured, and was not repelled by force of Indian arms, has not been forgotten. The likelihood of defeat and humiliation in any near-term conventional military engagement is a powerful incentive for India to avoid a possible conflict. While Pakistan sees no shame in fighting a larger army to a draw (as it has done—at least in its own telling—four times since 1947), India cannot bring itself to take a similar approach toward China: It cannot create a narrative under which mere survival is regarded as victory. Moreover, mere survival is not guaranteed in an all-out war. China is estimated to have a nuclear arsenal more than twice the size of India's, along with more-capable delivery systems.[43]

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[42] In 2007, to ease Chinese concern of such a potential alliance, India conducted a bilateral defense exercise with China, "Hand in Hand 2007." See Mishra, 2013, pp. 109–110.

[43] SIPRI, in its yearbook released June 3, 2013, puts China's arsenal at 250 warheads and India's at 90–110. See SIPRI, "Nuclear Force Reductions and Modernizations Continue; Drop in Peacekeeping Troops; No Progress in Cluster Munitions Control—New SIPRI Yearbook Out Now," press release, June 3, 2013.

Of lesser impact, but higher probability, is Chinese support for Pakistani military capabilities. The impact of such support depends on the specific capabilities conferred. Historically, Chinese technology has been vital to Pakistan's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.[44] Since the two countries established diplomatic ties in 1951, they have had a close and unbroken security relationship. China remains not only an indispensable supplier of conventional military hardware ranging from tanks to fighter jets, but also Pakistan's second-largest trading partner—as former president Pervez Musharraf put it, China is Pakistan's "all-weather" friend.[45] From Delhi's standpoint, this *de facto* alliance is directed against a common enemy: India.

Also in the high-probability/low–likely impact category, India sees continued Chinese assertion of its claims to Himalayan territories. These disputed territories lie in both the extreme northwest and extreme northeast of India. In the west, China has occupied a piece of Kashmir (Aksai Chin) since the 1950s, and has staked claims to other parts of Ladakh;[46] in the east, China claims the district of Tawang and other portions of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Apart from the low-probability threat of full-scale invasion, India fears Chinese action on both fronts through nonmilitary means. China has put considerable resources into the construction of roads and other infrastructure on its side of the LAC, laying the foundation for a *de facto* integration of these territories into China.[47] Reports of Chinese support to low-level

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[44] Jamal Afridi and Jayshree Bajoria, "China-Pakistan Relations," New York: Council on Foreign Relations, July 6, 2010.

[45] Pervez Musharraf, "Banquet Speech by President Musharraf in Honour of President Hu Jintao," Beijing: Embassy of Pakistan to China, November 23, 2006.

[46] Aksai Chin is more easily accessible from China than from other parts of Kashmir, so Chinese road-building in the virtually uninhabited territory was not detected by Delhi until several years after it began. Today, China's National Highway 219—connecting Tibet with Xinjiang—runs through Aksai Chin, making it an area of strategic importance.

[47] A Western observer who spends a lot of time in the area posits that India's unwillingness to match China's infrastructure development on its own side of the LAC may be a strategic choice rather than a budgetary one: Delhi may fear that any roads it constructs would facilitate a possible invasion. Lack of infrastructure in the disputed areas, under this theory, is itself a strategy for limiting the scope of any PLA incursion. Interview with Western source interviewed in India, date and location withheld at request of interviewee.

insurgent activity in Arunachal Pradesh remain unconfirmed,[48] but are a source of concern to Delhi. Between April 15 and May 5 in 2013, a platoon-sized unit of PLA troops established a post 17 miles across the LAC in Ladakh, southeast of the Indian base at Daulet Beg Oldi; the troops were resupplied by helicopter and only withdrawn after intensive diplomatic efforts on India's part. From India's perspective, this sort of territorial incursion remains a constant threat.

Furthest along the continuum (that is, actions that are definitely going on, but of uncertain impact), China continues to build maritime facilities throughout the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, in a move that feels like encirclement to Indian strategists. China's "String of Pearls" includes the ports of Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota and Colombo in Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh, and Kyauk-pyu in Myanmar. India sees these, and likely future projects, as a potential threat in its own back yard.[49]

India's fears, however, have not been translated into a coherent counterstrategy. "If China offers 'X,' we offer 'X minus 10,'" says a retired Indian naval officer.[50] Concern about China's possible *future* threat has been balanced by concern over sparking a *present-day* conflict. This strategic rationale for accommodation is bolstered by the economic arguments against confrontation: India has a great deal to lose if trade with China is curtailed, and does not have the budgeted resources for any sort of military escalation. In the view of some Indian analysts, Beijing has its own reasons for avoiding a conflict. "China doesn't want a slugfest with us," said one retired flag officer. "Their goal is to replace the U.S. as hegemon, so they don't want to waste resources by making us an

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[48] The Arunachal Dragon Force reportedly has sought Chinese support. South Asia Terrorism Portal, "Arunachal Dragon Force," 2001.

[49] Two sources reported that Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga had first offered India the contract to develop Hanbantota port, and only turned to China when Delhi refused. Interview with Singapore-based senior scholar of Southeast Asia, Singapore, January 18, 2013; interview with retired Indian diplomat who served as chief of mission in mainland Southeast Asia, 2013.

[50] Interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013.

enemy."[51] Indian planners see China as a *potential* threat, but see their mission as using all tools at their disposal—diplomatic ones if possible, military ones only if absolutely necessary—to prevent turning this *potential* adversary into an *actual* one.

What Are Some Potential Sparks of Sino-Indian Confrontation?

Could Sino-Indian conflict *outside* Southeast Asia spark a conflict *within* the region? There are a number of scenarios in which either nation might decide to step up confrontation in Southeast Asia as a flanking maneuver during a crisis with its roots elsewhere. Most such scenarios are linked to the mutual threat perceptions discussed above.

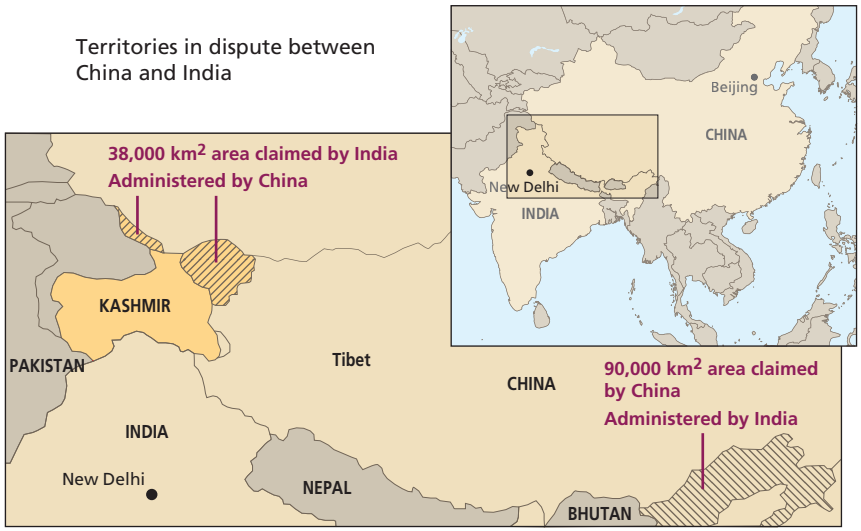
Sino-Indian competition along the LAC. Since large parts of the boundary between India and China remain subject to dispute, the *de facto* delineation is known as the Line of Actual Control (see Figure 5.3).[52] Disputed areas in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir have been the site of periodic military conflict from 1962 until the present day. The LAC in Arunachal Pradesh has not been the site of military action but may represent a greater long-term challenge: China has been actively developing the roads leading up to its side of the LAC, while India has made little effort at developing one of the most remote and economically backward parts of its territory. India sees China's interest in Arunachal Pradesh as a proxy for its battle for Tibet.[53] Unlike Kashmir, where China's interest is less deeply rooted and India's com-

[51] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

[52] When discussing India's borders, it is important to distinguish between the LAC and the LOC: The LAC is the *de facto* boundary in territories disputed by India and China, while the LOC is the *de facto* boundary in territories disputed by India and Pakistan.

[53] Beijing's claim on Tawant and other parts of Arunachal stems from these Himalayan territories' historical status as tributary to past Tibetan states.

Figure 5.3
Sino-Indian Line of Actual Control



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mitment is virtually existential, the potential for misunderstandings leading to rapid escalation remains significant in Arunachal Pradesh.[54]

Sino-Indian competition *vis-à-vis* Pakistan. India's longstanding rivalry with Pakistan has shown signs of potential softening in recent years. When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was sworn into office in May 2014, his counterpart Nawaz Sharif became the first Pakistani leader to attend such a ceremony. In 2007, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Singh achieved a near-breakthrough in secret negotiations over the fate of Kashmir. But these two positive moments were separated by a 2008 attack in Mumbai launched from Pakistani soil, by a terrorist group with longstanding ties to Pakistan's intelligence agency. Any Indo-Pakistani rapprochement remains a long-term prospect, if a realistic prospect at all. So long as India and Pakistan remain rivals and China remains Paki-

[54] One source predicted that the LAC would never be officially turned into a mutually recognized border, but that there was little likelihood of territory actually changing hands. Interview with retired Indian Army major general, 2013.

stan's "all-weather friend," India and China will remain at least potential adversaries.[55]

Sino-India competition in Central Asia/Afghanistan.[56] The world's two largest nations are unlikely to come to blows over the lands of the old Silk Road, but they may well engage in a revival of the Great Game that was played on this terrain during the 19th century. In a sense, a Sino-Indian Great Game would be a continuation of the version played out by Britain and Russia long ago: Britain's interest in Central Asia was always predicated on a desire to safeguard the stability of its Indian Raj, and Russia's interest in the khannates of the steppe was largely dictated (like China's today) by concern over the possibility of unrest among its internal Muslim populations. The tantalizing prospect of trade links and resource extraction, then as now, add an economic incentive to the geopolitical chess game. In Afghanistan, India sees a vital national interest in preventing a return to power by the Taliban, as well as in preventing Pakistan from creating a buffer state to provide it with "strategic depth." China, for its part, has been busily buying up the rights to Afghanistan's mineral resources—a trove estimated by a Pentagon study as potentially being worth $1 trillion.[57]

Sino-Indian competition in the Indian Ocean Region. China's purported "String of Pearls" (see Figure 5.4) has caused considerable discomfort to Indian strategists—and China seems to have every intention of acquiring more jewelry. The more pearls that are added to the strand—additional ports are rumored in the Maldives, Iran, the Seychelles, and Tanzania—the greater potential there is for Sino-Indian conflict. Some Indian theorists propose countering the String

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[55] For description of Indo-Pakistani conflict on Siachen Glacier, see Jonah Blank, "Kashmir: All Tactics, No Strategy," in Sumit Ganguly, ed., *The Kashmir Question: Retrospect and Prospect*, London: Frank Cass, 2003b, pp. 193–194.

[56] For a deeper discussion of China's strategy in Afghanistan and Central Asia, see Andrew Scobell et al., *What's Driving China's Policy Toward Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and What Does It Mean for the U.S. Air Force?* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, not cleared for publication. For discussion of similarities between the current Afghanistan scenario and prior versions of the Great Game, see Blank, 2011.

[57] For mineral resources in Afghanistan, see James Risen, "U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, June 13, 2010.

Figure 5.4
"String of Pearls"

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of Pearls with a "String of Diamonds"—a set of Indian bases in China's own perceived sphere of influence. In the view of one retired IAF flag officer, these gems might eventually include Indian access in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, and Australia.[58]

[58] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. For a geographically determinist argument of the region's strategic importance not only to India and China, but also to the United States, see Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*, New York: Random House, 2010; for a counterargument to Kaplan's geographical and cultural/ethnic determinist outlook, see Jonah Blank, "Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: A Review Essay," *India Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, April 2003a, p. 103; and Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002, p. 28ff.

How Might India Respond in Southeast Asia to Provocations Elsewhere?

If it perceived itself facing Chinese aggression in any of the theaters above, India might decide to undertake aggressive actions in Southeast Asia as a flanking maneuver.

India might more aggressively assert its own claims in the region. In December 2012, the commander of India's Navy, Admiral D. K. Joshi, caused a minor diplomatic stir when he answered a question about the South China Sea with the most forceful statement of Indian intent to date: "We have to protect our country's economic assets wherever they are; otherwise, what is the Navy for?" he said, noting that the Indian company "ONGC Videsh has three oil exploration blocks there" and "we will be required to go there and we are prepared for that."[59] This followed a slightly more cloaked statement six months earlier by Defense Minister A. K. Antony, at the 2012 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. In a barely concealed reference to China's claims in the South China Sea, Antony stated, "Unlike in previous centuries, maritime freedoms cannot be the exclusive prerogative of a few. Large parts of the common seas cannot be declared exclusive to any one country or group."[60]

India might engage in Southeast Asian territorial disputes in which it does not have a stake. Four nations with which India has friendly relations—Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei—are currently enmeshed in overlapping disputes over the Spratly Islands, the Paracel Islands, and the Scarborough Shoal;[61] in all of these con-

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[59] Vinay Kumar, "We'll Send Force to Protect our Interests in South China Sea, Says Navy Chief," *The Hindu*, December 3, 2012. . In October 2011, the Indian firm ONCG Videsh Ltd. signed a pact with Vietnam to expand joint exploration for oil and gas in parts of the South China Sea (Blocks 127 and 128 of Hainan Province) claimed by both Vietnam and China. The discomfort caused by this remark was not limited to Chinese observers: One former senior Indian security official noted Admiral Joshi's comment as an example of the hazards of letting uniformed officers speak publicly on matters of state policy. Interview location and date withheld at request of interviewee.

[60] Abhijit Iyer-Mitra, "Shangri La Dialogue: Indian Perspectives," New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, June 15, 2012.

[61] Not all of these nations have claims in each of these disputes, and there is some overlap of terminology. Taiwan also has interests in some of these disputes, and could also be part of an Indian flanking strategy.

flicts, China is the most powerful claimant. India currently has virtually no involvement in these disputes, but could decide to get engaged. One potential route would be by offering diplomatic support at international fora; another would be by purchasing stakes to areas claimed by China's rivals, much as it has done with Vietnam through ONCG Videsh Ltd.

India might step up its development of Sittwe Port in Myanmar. Such a move might challenge China along a full range of economic and military scales. On the economic front, a fully modernized port at Sittwe would provide direct competition to the Chinese facility just to the south at Kyaukpyu. On the military front, if the Indian navy became a presence at Sittwe (perhaps through refitting and refueling, or even routine port calls), China would feel even more threatened.

India might become a supplier of arms to countries of the region. Currently, India is not a significant supplier of arms to Southeast Asia. The largest regional customer since 2000 has been Myanmar, and the total trade there was merely $14 million— barely 1 percent of China's $1.2 billion trade in arms with the country during the same period.[62] But this might change. "In the future, Southeast Asia might come to resemble Sri Lanka," said a retired military officer. "Small countries are already saying, 'Give me some guns, give me a ship.' We haven't in the past. In the future, perhaps we will."[63] India has reportedly already explored selling Russian-designed BrahMos cruise missiles to Vietnam, and the Dhruv Advanced Light helicopter to Indonesia.[64]

India might engage in asymmetrical warfare. Virtually no sources interviewed saw India directly countering China in a conventional or nuclear confrontation. India might meet force with force if it has to, but is unlikely to seek out such a battle. That does not mean, however, that India would be unwilling to engage in asymmetric conflict. "Our policy is to dissuade China from aggression," said a retired Army general. "We're building up our space command, cyber com-

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62 SIPRI, *Arms Transfer Database*, undated.

63 Interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013.

64 Anirban Bhaumik, "India Plans to Supply Vietnam BrahMos Missiles," *Deccan Herald*, September 22, 2014; Huma Siddiqui, "Indonesia Plans to Buy Indigenous Dhruv," *Financial Express* (New Delhi), October 24, 2008.

mand, and special operations command. We have no choice but counter them asymmetrically, for at least the next decade."[65]

India might turn its Andaman/Nicobar Island bases into anti-Chinese battle stations. As currently configured, the set of bases on India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands do not appear to have an explicit mission geared at projecting power against the PLA's Air Force or Navy. That could change: India could step up its air defense systems, could forward-deploy bombers, could even forward-deploy nuclear missiles or aircraft capable of delivering nuclear missiles. The Andaman/Nicobar bases would drastically reduce Indian response time to an attack—Port Blair is about the same distance from New Delhi as is it is from the Chinese city of Chongqing (1,528 miles), and is about 500 miles closer to vital Chinese targets than are most existing Indian launching sites. The transformation of the Andaman/Nicobar bases into an "unsinkable aircraft carrier," even if never used for actual combat, might turn Chinese attention away from theaters of more concern to India.[66] It should be noted, however, that such a prospect is highly speculative: India's ability merely to maintain control of the 500 or so islands in the Andaman and Nicobar chain is not unchallenged. According to one source, the Indian Navy "is not fully confident of defending hundreds of small Indian islands scattered in the Indian Ocean region,"[67] while another notes the fear that some of the uninhabited islands may be "used by foreign outfits against the country" or that smugglers and arms dealers would use the islands as safehouses.[68]

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[65] Interview with retired Indian Army flag officer, 2013.

[66] Iskander Rehman, then a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment, wrote in 2012 that "Japan's clever use of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago as an unsinkable aircraft carrier during World War II is now being replicated by New Delhi." (Iskander Rehman, "Should India Fear China's Navy?" Observer Research Foundation, May 19, 2012). For additional reference to Andaman and Nicobar bases as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier," see "India's Strategic Pivot: Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Are India's 'Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier,'" *The Diplomat*, January 6, 2012.

[67] Sawhney, 2012.

[68] Yatish Yadav, "Ghost Islands Haunt Indian Intelligence," *The New Indian Express Online*, December 2, 2012.

CHAPTER SIX

India's Internal Politics, 2014–2030: Impact on Policy Toward Southeast Asia

Until May 16, 2014, the contours of India's national politics appeared familiar: The Congress Party and the BJP would struggle to build and maintain coalition governments, with a variety of regional-party barons holding the balance of power between these two rivals. While the BJP was widely expected to emerge from the 2014 general elections with the most seats and the clearest pathway to a governing coalition, the size and scope of the party's victory took almost all observers by surprise—for the first time in three decades, a single party won an absolute majority of seats in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of parliament), and therefore could govern without the restraints of coalition politics. When election results were announced May 16, all prior assumptions about the future course of India's foreign policy were rendered suspect. At a minimum, such assumptions now required serious reexamination.

This chapter takes such a reexamination as its starting point, and delves more deeply into the question of what India's internal politics will look like over the near term (for this question, 2015–2019) and medium term (2019–2030), as well as how these politics will shape India's policy toward Southeast Asia. The contention of the authors is that Modi's inauguration will likely have at least a modest impact, but is unlikely to result in a radical change of course—and after the next Lok Sabha election in 2019, it is quite possible that the pre-Modi political dynamics will again dominate foreign policy.

The most important analytical observation on India's domestic politics applies to the current Modi regime and to any likely succes-

sor: The basic *direction* of India's strategic engagement with Southeast Asia is likely to remain stable, but the *pace* of engagement may vary considerably. This does not imply that India's approach is on autopilot; while the steering wheel of the policy vehicle has only limited range of movement, the driver will have considerable leeway over application of the gas and brake.[1]

To a greater degree than in the past, India's engagement with several Southeast Asian nations may be significantly influenced by pivotal regional parties. The countries most likely to be affected are Myanmar and Malaysia—influenced, respectively, by the All-India Trinamool Congress (AITC) in West Bengal and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu. The trend of regional parties having a greater impact on Southeast Asia policy may accelerate after 2019, when a potential return to coalition government may increase these parties' power as kingmakers at the center.

Regardless of whether the BJP, Congress, or a Third Front holds office at any given time, it is likely that—apart from possible conflict with Pakistan or China—domestic political considerations will overshadow geopolitical concerns in the formulation of India's foreign policy. This has been the case throughout India's history, even at the height of Nehruvian pan-Asian sentiment, when single-party rule by Congress permitted elite policymakers greater leeway to ignore domestic concerns if they had so desired. It is likely to be the case for the next decade or more, whether under single-party BJP majority from 2014 to 2019, or what-

[1] Ambassador Rajiv Sikri, who held responsibility for implementing the Look East policy from 2002 to 2006, notes that "there is a domestic political and public consensus on India's LEP [Look East policy]. No party has ever questioned the desirability of closer engagement with Southeast Asia." (Strachan, Kang, and Sinha, 2009, p. 3). For additional discussion, see Harsh V. Pant, "China Rises, India Ponders: India's 'Look East' Policy Gathers Momentum," Melbourne: Australia India Institute, Spring 2013b. Some observers disagree: Walter Ladwig writes that "there is not necessarily support for a robust Asia-Pacific role across the political spectrum" (Ladwig, 2009, p. 103); Ian Hall argues that a fragmented political scene and bureaucrats who are "overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated" prevent India from have having a "unifying strategic vision" (Ian Hall, "China Crisis? Indian Strategy, Political Realism, and the Chinese Challenge," *Asian Security,* Vol. 8, No. 1, 2012, p. 89).

ever mixture of BJP, Congress, or coalition governments come to power in the subsequent general elections.[2]

Near Term (2015–2019): Broad Trends During the Modi Administration

For at least a year prior to the 2014 general election, India's foreign policy had been in a state of near stasis. The Modi administration brought a new set of ministers, a break from the Congress strategies of the previous decade, and expectations of more radical shifts in policy than India has experienced in a generation. In relation to Southeast Asia, four issues merit special attention.

Modi's plans for economic development may lead to increased trade with ASEAN members. Almost all of Modi's focus during the election was centered on issues of India's economy and governance, and these topics are likely to be the focus of his administration throughout the full course of its tenure. As chief minister of Gujarat, Modi assiduously sought out international investment for his state, and worked hard to remove bureaucratic impediments to trade.

He is likely to continue these efforts at the national level, and he has already signaled his interest in Looking East. He has a warm relationship with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whom he met on visits to Japan in 2007 and 2012. "I have a wonderful experience of working with Japan," Modi noted on assuming office. "I am sure we will take India-Japan ties to newer heights."[3] The sentiment is mutual: At the time of this writing, Abe followed only three people on

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[2] For discussion of the impact of divergent institutional viewpoints on India's attempt to forge a unified strategic culture, see Bajpai, 2002, pp. 245–303. For a discussion of the enduring dominance of domestic economic considerations on India's political development and policymaking, see Jonah Blank, "Democratization and Development," in Devin T. Haggerty, ed., *South Asia in World Politics*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005b, pp. 233–238.

[3] Frank Jack Daniel, "Twitter Friendship Blossoms for Asian Nationalists Modi and Abe," Reuters, May 21, 2014.

Twitter—his wife, a former governor of Tokyo, and Narendra Modi.[4] In Southeast Asia, Modi is likely to focus on countries he regards as being run by efficient, business-friendly governments. His strongest relationship in the region is with Singapore, a state for which he has deep admiration. One of his earliest trips as chief minister of Gujarat was to Singapore, and Singapore's former prime minister Goh Chok Tong has been described in the Indian press as "a confidant and mentor figure."[5]

Modi's record as chief minister in Gujarat may complicate relations with Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. For Muslims in India and around the world, the most important fact about Narendra Modi is the implication of his complicity in pogroms that took the lives of huge numbers of their co-religionists—likely well over 1,000—in 2002.[6] The spark the lit the conflagration remains disputed. On February 27, 2002, a trainload of RSS-linked activists returning from a protest in Ayodhya pulled into the Gujarati town of Godhra, and the Hindutva militants began harassing Muslim vendors in the station; a carriage of the train was set on fire—whether intentionally or by accident is still a point highly contested—and 59 Hindu passengers (many of them the wives and children of the RSS militants) were killed.

The aftermath is also disputed, and similarly horrific: Between 850 and 2,000 people were slaughtered in communal violence, the large majority of them Muslim. The exact numbers and circumstances have never been established. The police and other security forces in

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4 Daniel, 2014.

5 Ashok Malik, "Modi's Reach Abroad," *Times of India*, October 7, 2013.

6 The government tally of those killed in post-Godhra violence is 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus, but unofficial figures range up to 2,000 overall deaths, with the proportion tilted more heavily toward Muslim victims. For government figure: "790 Muslims, 254 Hindus Perished in Post-Godhra," *Times of India*, May 11, 2005. For figure of 2,000 killed, see Howard Spodek, "In the Hindutva Laboratory: Pogroms and Politics in Gujarat, 2002," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2, 2008. Less than two months after the initial killings, Human Rights Watch provided both a government tally of 850 and unofficial estimates going up to 2,000, and noted that murders were still being committed at the time of writing. Human Rights Watch, "'We Have No Orders to Save You': State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat," *Human Rights Watch Report*, Vol. 14, No. 3(C), April 2002, p. 4.

Gujarat pointedly refrained from quelling the pogroms, and in some instances are accused of aiding and abetting the Hindu rioters. As chief minister, Modi was the official in control of the security forces, and is often perceived as having tacitly or actively determined their response. While a Special Investigation Team appointed by India's Supreme Court found no evidence of Modi's complicity in the violence, many observers—particularly, but far from solely, Muslims—do not accept this finding. For his part, Modi has never expressed contrition for his handling of the riots.[7]

For Modi, and presumably for the plurality of Indian citizens who voted for the BJP in the 2014 elections, the Gujarat pogroms are a closed book. But for Muslims throughout the world, that is not necessarily the case. In Southeast Asia, press outlets in Muslim-majority Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei continue to reference the Gujarat riots prominently and critically in reporting on Modi.[8] Other states with significant Muslim minorities—including Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Myanmar—could see their relationship with India affected by the legacy of Godhra, although the precise impact will vary from nation to nation. In Thailand, the Philippines, and especially in Myanmar, central governments have taken harsh actions against minority Muslim populations, and at least some leaders in each of these states may regard Modi as a kindred spirit. It is possible that, as

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[7] For a discussion of the 2002 pogroms and Modi's role, see Christophe Jaffrelot, "Communal Riots in Gujarat: The State at Risk?" Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics, Working Paper No. 17, July 2003. Regarding the Special Investigation Team finding, see "Narendra Modi Gets Clean Chit in SIT Report on Gujarat Riots, Zakia Jafri Vows to Continue Her Fight," *Times of India*, April 10, 2012. Modi's noncontrition: After the Special Investigation Team's finding, Modi said, "I would feel guilty if I did something wrong. Frustration comes when you think 'I got caught. I was stealing and I got caught.' That's not my case." He portrayed himself as a bystander, with no ability to prevent the violence: "[if] someone else is driving a car and we're sitting behind, even then if a puppy comes under the wheel, will it be painful or not? Of course, it is. If I'm a Chief Minister or not, I'm a human being. If something bad happens anywhere, it is natural to be sad." Quoted in "No Guilty Feelings About Gujarat Riots, Says Modi," *The Hindu*, July 13, 2013.

[8] For representative press reports: Karim Raslan, "Mad About Modi," *Jakarta Globe* (Indonesia), March 14, 2013; "Abrasive Hindu Nationalist: India's Modi Set to Be PM," *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), May 26, 2014; "Obama Looks Past Gujarat Riots, Invites India's Modi," *Borneo Bulletin* (Brunei), May 18, 2014.

in India, the issue will remain a wound that is unhealed yet not crippling. But Southeast Asia is home to 252 million Muslims,[9] and their distrust of Modi will remain a factor in regional politics.[10]

Under Modi's BJP administration, India's religious and cultural connections to Southeast Asia may be given greater prominence. As discussed in Chapter Three, Indian leaders across the ideological spectrum place significant stock in the enduring "soft power" of India's millennium-old cultural ties to Southeast Asia; policymakers in the region, as noted earlier, do not typically see these ties as having nearly as much present-day relevance.

Congress leaders and the elite bureaucrats on whom they rely tend to see India's religious heritage as a powerful asset, but for many of them this position comes from the head rather than the heart. Nehru himself appreciated the more philosophical aspects of Hindu speculative thought, but was deeply agnostic and publicly dismissive of the traditional rituals and practices of the faith.[11] For the BJP, it is precisely the rites, myths, and observances that are at the heart of the

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[9] Muslim population of Southeast Asia from CIA, *World FactBook*, as of June 3, 2014: Indonesia, 221.1 million (87.2 percent of 253.6 million population); Malaysia, 18.5 million (61.3 percent of 30.1 million population); Philippines, 5.4 million (5 percent of 107.7 million population); Thailand, 3.3 million (4.9 percent of 67.7 million population); Myanmar, 2.2 million (4 percent of 55.7 million population); Singapore, 801,000 (14.3 percent of 5.6 million population); Brunei, 333,000 (78.8 percent of 423,000 population); Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Timor Leste total 341 million combined, by same database. Total for all ASEAN members plus Timor Leste: 251.975 million.

[10] For discussion of the problematic relationship with Indian Muslims of both the BJP and its ideological parent the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, see Jonah Blank, "Ram and Ram Rajya: The Babri Masji/Ramjanambhumi Dispute and the Politicization of a Divinity," *Journal of Vaisnava Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Fall 1994, pp. 159–174; for discussion of the relationship of Modi in particular, see Blank, 2003a, pp. 97, 103, 109–110.

[11] There is much debate about whether Nehru is best described as an agnostic, an atheist, or modern thinker still within the broad boundaries of Hinduism. Agnosticism would not automatically place him outside the parameters of the Hindu faith (more than a few BJP and RSS leaders have been quiet agnostics), but Nehru was quite outspoken in his lack of reverence for organized Hindu practice. As he wrote in his autobiography, "The spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organised religion, in India and elsewhere has filled me with horror, and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it" (Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1962, p. 373). For more detail on Nehru's personal views on Hinduism, see A. M. Rajasekhariah, "Jawaharlal Nehru's Contri-

Hindutva movement. V. D. Savarkar, the early 20th-century figure who first defined and shaped Hindutva, defined a Hindu simply as "a person who regards this land . . . from the Indus to the seas as his fatherland as well as his Holyland."[12]

How might India's policy toward Southeast Asia be affected by this change in attitude? The differences are likely to be subtle, but perhaps significant. For a Nehruvian policymaker, the fact that Thais and Indonesians treat the Sanskrit epic *Ramayana* as their own national tale is useful; for a BJP policymaker, it is potentially profound. The BJP first came to national prominence on precisely this issue. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, L. K. Advani structured the party's political campaign around "reclaiming" the site of the Hindu deity Ram's birth in Ayodhya, and forcing Indian Muslims to respect the *Ramayana* as a cultural lodestone for all citizens; the fact that most Indonesian Muslims do so of their own volition can be seen as validation of a core tenet of the Hindutva program. All ASEAN nations except the Philippines and Brunei have significant cultural ties that may receive increased attention under a Modi administration.

Indonesia, in addition to age-old reverence for the *Ramayana*, has a deep history of Hindu kingdoms thriving prior to the arrival of Islam in the archipelago. The island of Bali is still the largest Hindu-majority territory outside of South Asia, and may well see repeated visits by Modi.

Thailand's tie to the *Ramayana* is perhaps even stronger than that of Indonesia—in addition to providing subject material for Thai poets, painters, sculptors, dancers, musicians, and every other type of artist, the epic has provided the model for one of Thailand's most celebrated

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bution to Secularism in India—An Estimate," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 2, April-June 1987, pp. 216–219.

[12] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva,* Poona: S. P. Gokhale, 1942 edition, p. 113. As Ashutosh Varshney notes, this definition includes Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains, but excludes Christians, Parsis, and Muslims. (Ashutosh Varshney, "Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety," *Daedalus,* Vol. 7, No. 1, 1993, pp. 227–261). Savarkar's definition is explicitly nondoctrinal—that is, it does not describe a Hindu by what he or she believes—and more than a few Hindutva leaders have been described as being personally agnostic.

historical kingdoms (that of Ayutthaya—archaic Thai for Ayodhya) and the name of every Thai monarch for more than two centuries.

Malaysia is home to a large Hindu diaspora community, famous for its annual celebration of the Tamil Hindu festival of Thaipusam in the northern city of Penang. A Modi visit to Penang during this festival would win kudos not only from Hindutva supporters, but also from Tamil Nadu's former chief minister and longtime power-broker Jayalalithaa Jayaram.[13]

Cambodia saw its golden age under a Hindu kingdom: the medieval empire of Angkor, which lasted for 500 years and reached its height in the 12th century. This heritage is such a vital piece of national identity that an image of Angkor Wat, a temple originally dedicated to the Hindu deity Vishnu, is the main element of the Cambodian flag. The first modern restoration of Angkor Wat was carried out by the Archeological Survey of India in the 1980s and early 1990s. Given the importance of Angkor Wat tourism to the economy of Cambodia, increased Indian assistance for the upkeep and restoration of this religious site may be high on both countries' agenda.

Singapore's Indian diaspora community forms an even larger percentage of the population than that of Malaysia: up to 13 percent of Singapore's populace, compared with 7.2 percent of Malaysia's. As in Malaysia, most are Tamil Hindus. Singapore has a higher percentage of Hindu citizens than any nation outside of South Asia.[14]

Laos and Myanmar, as well as Thailand and Cambodia, have a strong connection to Indic culture through Theravada Buddhism. In Vietnam, as in Singapore, the majority religion is Mahayana

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[13] On September 27, 2014, after a court case lasting 18 years, Jayalalithaa was convicted of corruption and sentenced to four years in prison. She was succeeded two days later as chief minister by her longtime aide O. Panneerselvam. On October 17, India's Supreme Court granted her bail during her appeal, and she continues to control the party machinery by "remote control." K. V. Lakshmana, "Nothing Changes in TN: Jayalalithaa Will Run Govt by Remote Control," Hindustan Times, September 29, 2014; Sneha Shankar, "Indian Politician Jayalalitha to Ask for Bail, Interim Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu State Appointed," *International Business Times*, September 29, 2014.

[14] CIA, "Singapore," undated.

Buddhism—a strand of the faith tracing its origins to India, but filtered through the prism of China rather than transmitted directly.

Will these religious and cultural ties have a direct bearing on policy? Throughout his life, Narendra Modi has shown that he takes Hindu faith and heritage extremely serious. One of the more telling decisions of his electoral campaign was to contest for his own parliamentary seat from Varanasi—a pilgrimage city in which he has never lived, about 800 miles from Gujarat, but the holiest site on earth for devout Hindus.[15] The first specific policy announcement Modi made after election results were announced was a vow to clean up the sacred, yet toxically polluted, river Ganges by the end of his first term.[16]

Modi is likely to have good relations with the United States, laying the foundation for increased cooperation in Southeast Asia. When Prime Minister Modi entered office, observers in both nations expressed concern about the impact his election might have on U.S.-India relations. In 2005, Modi had been denied a visa to enter the United States: Under the terms of religious freedom legislation passed several years earlier, Modi's responsibility for the security apparatus in Gujarat during the 2002 pogroms established a presumption of non-admissibility.[17] The episode angered Modi at the time, but was already fading in importance well before the 2014 election. In February 2014,

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[15] Under Indian law, candidates can run from any constituency they chose, without a residency requirement. They may contest for multiple seats, and in 2014 Modi ran for seats in Vadodara in Gujarat, and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. He won both, and chose the Varanasi seat rather than the one from his own state.

[16] Archana Chaudhary and Rakteem Katekey, "Modi Invokes Mahatma Gandhi to Clean Mother Ganga," Bloomberg.com, May 28, 2014.

[17] The relevant legislation is Section 604 (a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (PL 105-292), which mandates that, "Any alien who, while serving as a foreign official, was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time during the preceding 24-month period, particularly severe violations of religious freedom, as defined in section 3 of the International Religious Freedom Act 1998, and the spouse and children, if any, are inadmissible." This subsection is an amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182 (a) (2); International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998. Modi planned to address a Florida conference of the Asian-American Hotel Owners' Association, a politically influential group composed largely of Gujarati-Americans; the visit was a private rather than an official one, which removed a potential rationale for providing a waiver.

U.S. Ambassador to India Nancy Powell not only met with Modi, but traveled to Gujarat to visit him on his home turf—an arrangement that the BJP regarded as an act of contrition.[18] After years of signaling that Modi would receive a visa if he reapplied, President Obama phoned the incoming prime minister immediately after his electoral victory and invited him for a near-term visit. Modi responded by publicly stating, in the formulation of his BJP predecessor Vajpayee, that the United States and India were "natural allies."[19] In September 2014, Modi made a high-profile visit to Washington, where he was feted with a White House dinner and a State Department lunch. On January 26, 2015, Obama attended India's Republic Day celebrations as Modi's guest—thereby becoming not only the first U.S. president to make such a gesture, but the first to visit India twice during his time in office. Whatever ill will may have existed between Modi and the United States in 2005 appears to have dissipated.[20]

If Modi follows the example of the last BJP administration, ties between the two nations may warm up considerably. Vajpayee, the BJP's only prior prime minister, got off to a rocky start with the United States by authorizing India's first nuclear test since the initial "peaceful nuclear explosion" undertaken by Indira Gandhi nearly a quarter-century earlier. But less than two years after the 1998 Pokharan-II

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[18] Harwinder Baweja and Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, "U.S. May Ship Out Nancy Powell to Please Modi," *Hindustan Times*, March 25, 2014.

[19] Sachin Parashar, "Narendra Modi, Barack Obama Will Meet in Washington in September," *Times of India*, June 5, 2014.

[20] The years of positive signaling were based, at least in part, on the time limits written into the International Religious Freedom Act: Even if Modi's complicity in the Gujarat riots were proven, by the time Obama took office the incident was beyond the legislation's two-year window of applicability. Moreover, the political circumstances surrounding the original denial had changed considerably. For a discussion of the behind-the-scenes politics of the visa denial, see Zahir Janmohamed, "U.S. Evangelicals, Indian Expats Teamed Up to Push Through Modi Visa Ban," *New York Times*, December 5, 2013. Ashley Tellis, who served as an advisor to the U.S. ambassador to India during the previous BJP government, sees Modi as holding a personal grudge for his visa denial in 2005, but does not regard this as an impediment to a productive bilateral relationship; he notes that, as a head of government, Modi will receive an A-class visa automatically for official visits, and therefore the visa issue is moot. See Ashley J. Tellis, "Productive but Joyless? Narendra Modi and U.S.-India Relations," Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014.

tests, Bill Clinton became the first sitting U.S. president to visit India in decades, and a few months later he hosted Vajpayee at a state dinner in Washington. Vajpayee and President George W. Bush initiated an agreement to enable the United States to sell nuclear technology to India, creating a pathway for India to emerge from what it considered an unjust "nuclear pariah" state and marking perhaps the two nations' closest moment since the administration of John F. Kennedy.[21] The U.S. business community has been an enthusiastic supporter of Modi since the early days of his tenure in Gujarat, and sees him as a partner in opening the Indian market to greater U.S. investment. If past is prelude to the future, the new BJP prime minister is well positioned to work closely with American presidents of either political party. For the reasons described earlier in this report, Southeast Asia may well represent a compelling area for such increased U.S.-India cooperation.

It is important to note, however, that India's near-term foreign policy will have at least as many points of continuity as discontinuity. This is the result of many factors, of which two merit special attention.[22]

First, the BJP is not the polar opposite of Congress. The nation's two largest parties have many points of agreement, even if they sometimes arrive at congruent policy positions by different ideological pathways. India's nuclear policy is a good example. The first atomic test was carried out under a Congress government, its follow-up under a BJP one; the civil nuclear deal with the United States was initiated by a BJP prime minister, and finalized by a Congress one. Vajpayee committed India to a policy of nuclear no-first-use, and Manmohan Singh maintained the commitment; a month before the election, Modi vowed to

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[21] For a discussion of the warming of relations under Vajpayee and Bush, written by a scholar who would subsequently serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense with responsibility for security policy toward India and Southeast Asia, see James C. Clad, "An Unexpected Chance to Get Down to the Fundamentals," in Lee Feinstein, James C. Clad, Lewis A. Dunn, and David Albright, *A New Equation: U.S. Policy Toward India and Pakistan After September 11*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Non-Proliferation Project, Global Policy Program, Working Paper No. 27, 2002, pp. 13–21.

[22] For discussion of some of the other factors that might incline Prime Minister Modi toward a policy of continuity, see Blank, 2014.

maintain this position. "There is no compromise on that," he said. "We are very clear. No first use is a reflection of our cultural inheritance."[23]

Likewise, foreign policy independence is by no means limited to the camp of Nehruvian NonAlignment. The BJP has, from its earliest days, steadfastly rejected a foreign policy based on permanent alliances with any other nation. The BJP's position on international trade was, at least prior to Modi's inauguration, encapsulated in the slogan "Computer chips, not potato chips"—shorthand for accepting foreign technology, but not foreign consumer goods or culture. It applied the term *swadeshi*—a Gandhian word, roughly translatable as "of one's own country," with connotations of nationalistic self-sufficiency—to both its economic and geopolitical ideals. Even after Vajpayee described the United States and India as "natural allies," he turned down Washington's request for participation in the Iraq War: The Bush administration put intense pressure on Vajpayee to send a full army division of 17,000 troops, and wound up receiving not a single soldier.[24]

Perhaps the most important similarity between the BJP and Congress is that they are both political parties. Politics are politics, and the BJP has often been forced to accommodate its ideology to the realities of electoral math. An illustrative example is the issue of caste quotas. During the late 1980s, the BJP opposed the Congress and Janata Dal agenda of extending official reservations—quotas in government jobs and university admissions—to a much wider swath of Indian society. In effect, the BJP championed the cause of the "twice born" Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya *varnas* (Vedic classes), and opposed the extension of affirmative action programs to the Shudra *varna*.[25] By the

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[23] Douglas Busvine, "Modi Says Committed to No First Use of Nuclear Weapons," Reuters, April 17, 2014.

[24] John Kifner, "In Rebuff to U.S., India Says It Won't Send Troops to Iraq," *New York Times*, July 14, 2003.

[25] Brahmins, Kshatriya and Vaishya, or "twice-born" *varnas*, represent approximately one-quarter of India's population. Dalits (the castes termed Untouchable prior to India's post-independence constitution) and *adivasis* (tribal communities) comprise another quarter, and have very specific reservations written into the constitution: Dalits are officially called Scheduled Castes and adivasis are called Scheduled Tribes because their status is engraved as a "schedule" of the constitution. The remainder of the Hindu population, in essence, the

early 1990s, however, the BJP had abandoned this approach: Focusing on a base no larger than one-quarter of the population was a clear path to electoral irrelevance. Throughout the 1990s, the BJP allied with regional parties championing lower-caste agendas, and dropped its upper-caste orientation. By the 2014 election, Modi was using his own lower-caste background as an effective tool to hammer his higher-status Congress rival.

Second, many of the institutional impediments to rapid change are still in place. One of these is the deeply structured inertia of the Indian bureaucracy. The most important parts of the Indian government are staffed largely by officers of the elite Indian Administrative Service (IAS). This service is meritocratic, and the officers it produces are generally extremely competent, devoted to their mission, and personally vested in maintaining the *status quo*. Regardless of which leader is at the helm, the IAS will be manning the duty stations. Translation of top-level policy guidance into actual policy implementation will ultimately rely on the cooperation of a firmly entrenched officialdom.

Hopes for a new vigor in India's government post-2014 are based on the fact that the BJP holds a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha. This gives the Modi administration a very powerful position: The Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's parliament, is the locus of power in the government. But there are other centers of power, and they are not controlled by the prime minister.

The upper house of the parliament, the Rajya Sabha, is roughly analogous to the House of Lords in the British System, although it has somewhat more power. Its system of election closely mirrors that of the United States Senate prior to the adoption of the 17th Amendment to the Constitution: Members are chosen not by the electorate, but by

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entirety of the Shudra *varna*, is officially referred to as Other Backward Castes, or OBCs. In 1980, the Mandal Commission, a panel established by the Janata Dal government in 1979, recommended extending reservations from the Dalits and adivasis to OBC castes, thereby making 49.5 percent of the nation's population eligible for quotas. In the late 1980s, one of the principal issues dividing the BJP and Congress was whether to implement this recommendation of the Mandal Commission. For discussion of the distinction between *jati* and *varna*—i.e., between "caste" and the larger social classes first described in the Vedas—as well as discussion of reservation and caste quotas, see Blank, 2000, pp. 120–148.

the legislatures of the Indian states. Like U.S. senators, Rajya Sabha members sit for a term of six years, and have staggered appointments with one-third of the body up for election every two years. Unlike its American counterpart, the Rajya Sabha is clearly subordinate to the lower chamber. Like a more powerful version of the House of Lords, however, it can block significant overhaul of legislation. After the Lok Sabha election of 2014, the BJP-led coalition fell far short of controlling the Rajya Sabha—out of 250 members, the BJP held only 46 seats, and its National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition held only 65; by contrast, the Congress party alone held 68 Rajya Sabha seats. Until the next Rajya Sabha election in 2016, and quite possibly even after, Modi will remain far short of holding full control of India's central government.

Moreover, many of the crucial decisions in Indian government are not made at the center. Modi's reputation as a can-do executive stems from his tenure as chief minister, a post that often provides more scope for unilateral action than does that of the prime minister. Infrastructure projects typically rely on decisions made in provincial capitals rather than in New Delhi, especially on crucial issues such as appropriation of land for public use, routing of roads or highways, and allotment of energy from the state-controlled power grid. In such cases, chief ministers will face greater pressure than central authorities to maintain the *status quo*: Construction of a new airport, linked to a metropolis by a four-lane highway, may displace thousands of voters and disrupt hundreds of established local business interests; the opening of a new factory complex will draw energy from existing constituents. As the officials ultimately able to approve or block such projects, the chief ministers may often base their decisions on very different calculations than the ones guiding policy at the center. At the time of writing, only five of India's 29 states and two Union Territories had chief ministers from the BJP (Chattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan), and only four others (Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Nagaland, and Pondicherry) had chief ministers from other members of the BJP-led NDA. By contrast, Congress held the chief minister's office in ten states, and other parties hostile to the BJP held another six chief ministerial slots. For the initial period of his administration, at least, Modi

will face potentially strong headwinds in bringing his agenda to the local officials with the power to thwart it.

Medium Term (2019–2030): Coalition Governments May Be Reversion to Norm

For the first 42 years after independence, India was governed by a single political party; for all but a brief period, that party was the Indian National Congress Party. Even the short interlude of governance by the Janata Party, lasting less than three years (from March 28, 1977, to January 14, 1980), was a political anomaly: Janata's majority was largely due to a protest vote against the "emergency" suspension of democratic rule imposed by Congress leader Indira Gandhi in 1975; indeed, the Indira-led Congress won a crushing victory in 1980. And after Indira's assassination in 1984, Congress won the greatest number of seats—414, or 78 percent of the 533-seat Lok Sabha—ever tallied in an Indian general election. For more than half of its independent history, India has been effectively a one-party state led by Congress.

The 1989 election, however, marked a political turning point. Every election between that date and 2014 produced a hung parliament, resulting in a solid quarter-century of coalition governments. Three of these governments were led by Congress, one by the BJP, and two by looser coalitions centered around the Janata Dal.[26]

Will the BJP administration, expected to last from 2014 to 2019, mark the return to single-party rule on an enduring basis? Perhaps, but three factors suggest that post-2019 coalition governments may return as reversion to the modern norm.

First, the BJP is not a majority party—and doesn't approach the support Congress had during its heyday. In 2014, the BJP won

[26] These are the number of general elections, not the number of prime ministers. In several cases, governments were reshuffled without the calling of a new general election. In 1996, for example, the BJP won only 187 seats, but, as leader of the largest party, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in as prime minister; he left office after just two weeks, unable to cobble together a majority coalition. Two prime ministers from the *ad hoc* United Front coalition—H. D. Deve Gowda and I. K. Gujral—governed before new elections were held in 1999.

fewer than one-third of the votes cast (31 percent), only slightly more than the percentage won by Congress in the previous election (29 percent). No party has ever won an absolute majority of the popular vote: The closest any has come was 49 percent, won by Congress during its blowout victory of 1984. But the BJP's tally is 10 percent lower than the worst popular-vote percentage ever tallied during the period of single-party rule (41 percent, by Congress in 1967). In short, it is far too early to conclude that the BJP is poised to usher in a return to the single-party rule that characterized the first four decades of Indian politics.

Due to India's first-past-the-post electoral system, relatively small differences in vote count can translate into enormous differences in seat allotment. This structure rewards parties whose support is deep rather than broad: A party with a committed base in a few dozen constituencies may win more seats than a party enjoying merely lukewarm support from hundreds of millions of voters. Being voters' second choice counts for nothing today, but may well count for everything tomorrow—the same electoral quirk that gave the BJP a disproportionate reward in 2014 could easily bring the party a disproportionate rebuke in 2019.

Second, Congress is down, but not out. In 2014, Congress won the fewest seats in its history, but previous obituaries for the party have proven to be premature. In 1977, when Congress was unceremoniously voted out of office for the first time since the nation's founding, many observers thought that Indira Gandhi's anti-democratic "Emergency" had mortally wounded her party; three years later, she proved that was not the case. Following her son Rajiv's assassination during the 1991 election, Congress was left without a dynastic heir at the helm; elder statesman Rao assembled a stable coalition, and served out a full five-year term. In 1996, 1998, and 1999, Congress was stuck in the political wilderness; Rajiv's widow, Sonia, presided over a loss in 1999 that netted the lowest number of seats to that point (114); the very next election, Sonia and her loyal supporter Manmohan Singh eked out a surprise victory and extended it comfortably in the subsequent poll. In fact, the results of 2009 were almost the mirror image of 2014 (see Table 6.1)—suggesting that another inversion remains distinctly possible.

Table 6.1
Comparison of Congress and BJP Lok Sabha Seats, 2009 and 2014

Seats	Popular Vote (%)	Number of Seats	% of Seats
Congress 2009	29	206	38
BJP 2009	19	117	22
Congress 2014	19	44	8
BJP 2014	31	282	51

There is no guarantee that Congress will emerge from its slump in 2019, or ever. But an analysis of past elections—and consideration of India's electoral structure—suggests that even a relatively small upswing in support for the party could radically alter the political landscape in future elections.

Third, the trend toward regionalization of politics is far from over. One reason the nation saw a stretch of coalition governments in the 1990s was the rise of India's regional parties. In the run-up to the 2014 elections, some predicted that voters disenchanted with the lackluster performance of Congress would migrate to regional parties rather than to the BJP. Leaders of several such parties were put forward as potential compromise candidates for prime minister in the event of a hung parliament.[27] This prediction was not borne out: The four largest regional parties in the 15th Lok Sabha fared even worse than Congress did, with three of them failing to win a single seat.[28] The BJP made huge gains in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, vote-rich states in the northern "cow belt" that have been dominated by regional parties for decades, and were deemed by many to be permanently beyond the reach of either national party.

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[27] Three such regional leaders mentioned by commentators were Mayawati, Jayalalithaa Jayaram, and Mamata Bannerjee. See Devesh Kumar, "Mayawati: From First Dalit UP Chief Minister to PM Aspirant," NDTV.com, April 2, 2014.

[28] The Samajwadi Party, based in Uttar Pradesh, dropped from 23 seats to five. The Bahujan Samaj Party (Uttar Pradesh), the Janata Dal-United (Bihar), and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Tamil Nadu), holding 21, 20, and 18 seats, respectively, in the 15th Lok Sabha, were all wiped out completely in the 16th Lok Sabha.

But reports of the death of regionalism, like reports of the death of Congress, are greatly exaggerated. At least six regional parties made very striking gains, and the seat count held by regional parties actually rose in the latest election, from 174 to 191.[29] In fact, regional parties have won more than 100 seats in every election since 1991. By contrast, regional parties never won more than a few dozen seats—typically 30 to 50—in any contest from 1947 to 1991.

These data—the lack of a popular-vote landslide for the BJP, indications that Congress might stage a future comeback, and the continuing strength of regional parties as potential kingmakers—suggest that India's political landscape in the 2019–2030 time frame is at least as likely resemble the coalition government of the past quarter-century as the single-party dominance of the nation's first four decades.

What Are the Elements of Potential Future Coalitions?

The number needed for a majority is 272 seats. The fewer seats a governing coalition winds up controlling, the more future prime ministers will be hobbled by the need to maintain support from a fractious collection of regional or ideological parties. There are three potential coalitions that could end up forming governments in the post-2019 period.

National Democratic Alliance (NDA): This coalition is centered on the Hindu revivalist BJP, which held power from 1998 to

[29] The regional parties gaining the most seats were the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Tamil Nadu: 37, up from 9); the All India Trinamool Congress (West Bengal: 34, up from 19); the Biju Janata Dal (Odisha: 20, up from 14); the Telugu Desam Party (Andhra Pradesh: 16, up from 6); the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (Telangana: 11, up from 2); the YSR Congress Party (Andhra Pradesh: 9—new party). The definition of "regional party" can be slippery, since there is considerable overlap between parties organized on the basis of region, caste, and ideolog. For example, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) is an ideological party, but largely confined to West Bengal and Tripura; since its self-identification is based more on ideology than regionalism, it is excluded from the tally above. On the other side of the ledger, Shiv Sena is a Hindu Nationalist party centered in the state of Maharashtra, and could plausibly be described as either an ideological or a regional party; it is included in the tally of regional parties above (and expanded its seat count to 18 from 11) due to its fierce strain of Maharashtrian regional self-identification—the party is named after the 18th century Maratha leader Shivaji Bhonsole.

2004, prior to its victory in the 2014 elections.[30] At the time of writing, the NDA has 30 member parties, holding a total of 336 seats in the Lok Sabha and 63 seats in the Rajya Sabha. Fewer than half of these parties hold any seats in either chamber of parliament, and only three have seat counts in the double-digits: the BJP (282, Lok Sabha; 46, Rajya Sabha), Shiv Sena (18, Lok Sabha; four, Rajya Sabha), and the Telugu Desam Party (16, Lok Sabha; six, Rajya Sabha).

NDA chief ministers hold office in nine states and territories: Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Nagaland, and Puducherry; the first five are held by BJP ministers, the others by allied regional parties.

At least a half-dozen important regional parties have been part of the NDA in the past, and could rejoin the coalition in the future. These parties include the AIADMK and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), based in Tamil Nadu; the AITC, based in West Bengal; the Janata Dal-United (JDU), based in Bihar; the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), based in Odisha; and the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), based in what is now the newly formed state of Telangana.

From the perspective of India's relations with Southeast Asia, NDA policy remains a work in progress at the time of writing: The first year of the Modi administration provides little evidence of a significant change from the slow-but-steady policies of both BJP and Congress regimes (see Table 6.2).

United Progressive Alliance (UPA): Centered on the Indian National Congress Party, the UPA carries the standard of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. The party is in a period of transition, and what was its strongest selling point in the past may prove its greatest weakness in the future. Congress utterly dominated the first four decades of India's history on the basis of its dynastic heritage, but this has been less convincing since the mid-1990s. While many voters are still drawn by the legacy of the three Nehru-Gandhi prime ministers (Jawaharlal Nehru; his daughter, Indira Gandhi; and her son, Rajiv Gandhi), the family mantle has not yet been successfully passed to a fourth generation. Rajiv's son, Rahul, was the standard-bearer in the 2014 election, but

[30] The BJP also held power, before the creation of the NDA, for 16 days in 1996.

Table 6.2
Comparison of India's Two Major Parties

Party	Leaders	Regional Base	Demographic Base/Ideology	Seat Range (1984–2014)	SE Asia Stance
Indian National Congress (INC)	Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi	National	Nehruvian secularism; dynastic allegiance to Nehru-Gandhi family; demographics of support vary from state to state	High: 414 (1984) Low: 44 (2014)	Crafted, and supports, Look East policy
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	Narendra Modi	National	Hindutva/"Hindu Nationalism" Supporters tend to be from middle-ranks of caste and class hierarchy, more urban than rural	High: 282 (2014) Low: 2 (1984)	Supported Look East policy during prior tenure in office; Modi's rhetoric on China is hard-line, but stresses economic development

NOTE: Seat counts listed above are at time of election. 1984–2014 time period corresponds to the Lok Sabha elections held since the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the pivot-point from single-party dominance to coalition government; it also marks the high and low points for both Congress and the BJP.

his BJP opponent Narendra Modi effectively turned the dynastic argument against Congress by comparing his own background as the son of a chai wallah (tea seller) with that of Rahul as a political shahzada (prince).[31] Rajiv's widow, Sonia Gandhi, still holds tight control over the party, but neither Rahul nor his sister, Priyanka, has yet emerged as a successor likely to reinvigorate the family brand. Congress may develop an identity separate from that of the Nehru-Gandhis, but such a process has not yet even begun.

With the UPA out of power and Congress in shambles, the coalition has little definition or coherence. Twelve parties are currently members, but Congress is the only one with Lok Sabha members in the double-digits. Parties that have previously been part of the UPA include the DMK, AITC, and TRS, as well as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), based in Uttar Pradesh. The AIADMK and the Rashtryia Janata Dal (RJD, based in Bihar) joined Congress-led coalitions prior to the foundation of the UPA. A Left Front of Communist and Socialist parties, centered around the Communist Party of India (Marxist), have sometimes provided parliamentary support to the UPA without formally joining the coalition.

From the perspective of impact on India's Southeast Asia policy, periods of UPA governance would likely be marked by a continuation of current trends—that is, slow, steady engagement. The future would look much like the present: As one senior retired diplomat noted, India's central foreign policy during the most recent two Congress terms in office has been to support India's domestic economic growth. If China threatened this goal (for example, by denying transit for Indian vessels through waters claimed by China), India might respond militarily—but otherwise, India's goal in Southeast Asia would be to avoid confrontation.[32] A retired flag officer noted the role of politics even in Congress security policy; he described former Defense Minister A. K. Antony as being Sonia Gandhi's most trusted confidant—more trusted even than Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The source said

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[31] Rashpal Singh, "Narendra Modi Keeps Up Attack on 'Shahzada,'" *Hindustan Times*, October 26, 2013.

[32] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

Antony saw his mission at MoD as keeping the boat moving forward, but never any faster than he could control it.[33]

Third Front: There is a significant possibility that some of India's post-2019 governments will be led by neither Congress nor the BJP. There have been several "Third Front" coalitions in past decades, and none of them have been particularly strong or long-lived.[34] In all, six of India's 15 prime ministers have come from parties other than Congress or the BJP.[35] Only one of them—Morarji Desai, serving from 1977 to 1979, immediately after Indira Gandhi's "Emergency Rule" suspension of democracy—was in office for a full year.

Significant parties that could conceivably join a Third Front include the BSP, led by Mayawati, and the Samajwadi Party (SP), led by Mulayam Singh Yadav, both based in Uttar Pradesh; the AIADMK, controlled by Jayalalithaa Jayaram, and the DMK, led by Karunanidhi, both based in Tamil Nadu; the AITC, led by Mamata Banarjee and based in West Bengal; the JDU, led by Nitish Kumar and based in Bihar; the BJD, led by Naveen Patnaik and based in Odisha; and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), led by Prakash Karat. Virtually any of the dozens of small regional parties in India, however, could legitimately be members, or even leaders, of a Third Front government.

None of the prospective Third Front leaders are antagonistic to the idea of engagement with Southeast Asia.[36] Any Third Front coalition,

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[33] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. The source implied, but did not directly say, that Antony might be more concerned about Congress politics than about India's security policy—and that his decisions as Minister of Defense should be seen in that light.

[34] The first of these was the National Front, which governed from 1989 to 1991. The second was the United Front, which held power from 1996 to 1998. The term "Third Front" is used here to refer to any coalition led by parties other than Congress or the BJP, including potential groupings that are sometimes referred to in Indian politics by names including Third Front, Fourth Front, or Left Front.

[35] Morarji Desai (Janata Party, 1977–1979); Charan Singh (Janata Party-Secular, 1979–1980); V. P. Singh (Janata Dal/National Front, 1989–1990); Chandra Shekhar (Samajwadi Janata Party, 1990–1991); H. D. Deve Gowda (Janata Dal/United Front, 1996–1997); I. K. Gujral (Janata Dal/United Front). One of the Congress prime ministers was a caretaker: Gulzarilal Nanda, who served 13 days in 1964 and 13 days in 1966.

[36] The Communist-dominated Left Bloc (which objects to a pro-U.S. agenda) is the only significant Third Front potential component that might have a markedly different view of

however, is highly likely to focus far more on purely domestic concerns than on international ones (see Table 6.3). Yadav served as Minister of Defense from 1996 to 1998 during a United Front administration; his tenure was not noteworthy for bold initiatives or deep strategic planning. Under a Third Front administration, security engagement with Southeast Asia is unlikely to be reversed, but might be scaled back through decreased budgets and shrinking high-level attention. Economic engagement with Southeast Asia is unlikely to be a top priority for a Third Front government.

Impact of Regional Parties on Southeast Asia Policy

One of the most important ways in which India's domestic politics will affect its Southeast Asia policy will be through the impact of a few specific regional parties, most notably those centered in the Indian states closest to mainland and maritime Southeast Asia (see Table 6.4). At least half a dozen regional parties will be potential coalition-makers (or breakers), but only a few of these have a policy interest in Southeast Asia.

India's relations with, and connectivity to, mainland Southeast Asia will be strongly influenced by the stance of West Bengal's AITC, led by Mamata Banerjee. All pathways for land connectivity to Southeast Asia run through India's Northeast—and all pathways to India's Northeast run through West Bengal. Politically as well as geographically, Delhi's policy toward its remote, lightly populated northeastern states has tended to run through Kolkata; this dynamic is not likely to change any time soon. West Bengal's Chief Minister Banerjee has shown little interest in Southeast Asian engagement, even though her state stands to benefit handsomely from increased trade. Given the relative political weakness of the seven states in India's

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foreign policy in general, and Southeast Asia policy in particular. It is unlikely, however, that the Left Bloc will force a significant shift in India's foreign policy: During the last UPA administration, the Left Bloc supported the coalition from the outside without demanding a change in Southeast Asia policy. The main foreign policy issue for the Left Bloc has been the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal.

Table 6.3
Comparison of India's Major "Swing" Parties (excluding regional parties with specific Southeast Asia concerns, described in Table 6.4)

Party	Leaders	Regional Base	Demographic Base/Ideology	Seat Range (1984-2014)	SE Asia Impact
Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M)	Prakash Karat, Sitaram Yechury	National, esp. West Bengal and Tripura	Communist ideology. 4–6 other Communist or Socialist parties often ally with CPI-M as Left Bloc	High: 43 (2004) Low: 9 (2014)	Rejects free trade and pro-U.S. positions; rejects anti-China stance
Samajwadi Party (SP)	Mulayam Singh Yadav	Uttar Pradesh	Demographic base: Other Backward Castes (OBCs), esp. Yadavs; also Muslims	High: 36 (2004) Low: 5 (2014)	Could impact Myanmar policy over Rohingya issue
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	Mayawati	Uttar Pradesh	Demographic base: Dalits; also OBCs	High: 21 (2009) Low: 0 (2014)	Not major priority
Janata Dal-United (JDU)	George Fernandes	Bihar, Jharkand	Center-left, but prior incarnations of the party have allied with BJP	High: 21 (1999) Low: 2 (2014)	Not major priority
Biju Janata Dal (BJD)	Naveen Patnaik	Odisha	Primarily regional—has allied with BJP, but current leader rejects Modi tie-up	High: 20 (2014) Low: 9 (1998)	Possible focus on Bay of Bengal nations
Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	Laloo Prasad Yadav (*de facto*)	Bihar	OBCs (esp. Yadavs) and Muslims	High: 24 (2004) Low: 4 (2014)	Possible impact on Rohingyas

NOTES: Seat counts listed are at time of election. Highs and lows are since respective parties' founding. Parties listed above represent those that have had a double-digit seat count in at least one of the past three elections, and are not *de facto* parts of either the Congress or BJP-led coalitions. Regional parties with strong Southeast Asia stances are listed separately in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4
Comparison of India's Regional Parties with Southeast Asia Impact

Party	Leaders	Regional Base	Demographic Base/Ideology	Seat Range (1984–2014)	SE Asia Impact
All-India Trinamool Congress (AITC)	Mamata Banerjee	West Bengal	Split from INC; local political opponent is Left Front; has allied with both Congress and BJP in past	High: 34 (2014) Low: 1 (2004)	Connectivity to Myanmar relies heavily on Kolkata
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	M. Karunanidhi	Tamil Nadu	Focused almost entirely on Tamil Nadu; bitter rival of AIADMK	High: 18 (2009) Low: 0 (2014)	Has focused on Tamil diaspora in South Asia
All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)	Jayalalitha Jayaram	Tamil Nadu	Focused almost entirely on Tamil Nadu; bitter rival of DMK	High: 37 (2014) Low: 0 (2004)	Has focused on Tamil diaspora in South Asia
Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS)	K. Chandrashekar Rao	Telangana	Supported creation of Telangana state, as vehicle for Telugu identity	High: 11 (2014) Low: 2 (2009)	Could focus on Telangana diaspora, possible IT issues
Telugu Desam Party (TDP)	Nara Chandrababu Naidu	Andhra Pradesh	Bitter opponent of TRS and other Telangana parties	High: 30 (1984) Low: 2 (1989)	Could focus on Telugu diaspora, IT issues

NOTE: Small Northeastern regional parties are excluded from this chart, since they seldom gain more than a few seats each, and do not operate as a bloc. Seat counts listed above are at time of election.

Northeast, any push for engagement with Myanmar and other mainland countries will be dependent on Banerjee's support.

Banerjee has a reputation for mercurial behavior; the lack of progress on water and energy projects between India and Bangladesh, for example, is said to be at least partly due to Banerjee's hands-off stance.[37] Banerjee may be a dominant player in shaping future coalitions. Her party holds 34 seats in the current Lok Sabha, only ten fewer than Congress, and in 2014 she crushed her traditional Communist rivals to solidify internal support in West Bengal. She has allied with both Congress and the BJP in the past, so she will remain a force to be courted—and her whims on topics related to Myanmar or other Southeast Asian countries may well become policy.[38]

India's relations with maritime Southeast Asia will be strongly influenced by the two battling parties of Tamil Nadu. The AIADMK is controlled by Jayalalithaa Jayaram,[39] and the DMK is led by M. Karunanidhi; the guiding principles for both parties are quest for power, and mutual antagonism. Both Tamil parties are led by volatile figures, and neither has a firmly cemented national-level political alliance. Jayalalithaa allied with Congress in the early 1990s, with the BJP in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and was widely seen prior to the 2014 election as being likely to provide Modi with the seats necessary

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[37] According to a Western observer based in the region, Banerjee has been the major impediment closer trade relations between India and Bangladesh. A water-sharing agreement for the Teesta/Brahmaputra River, for example, would enable India to construct a series of dam projects that would bring 50,000 megawatts of electricity on-line. Banerjee is unwilling to permit a deal merely institutionalizing the status quo, let alone providing Bangladesh with *more* water (as would be requirement for Dhaka to agree to permitting dams upstream). Interview with foreign source interviewed in India, date and location withheld at request of interviewee.

[38] A formal alliance with Modi-led BJP is unlikely. About 27 percent of the population of West Bengal is Muslim, and they vote overwhelmingly for Bannerjee. (Interview with foreign source interviewed in India, date and location withheld at request of interviewee.) But Banerjee could support either the BJP or Congress from outside an official coalition.

[39] At the time of writing, Jayalalithaa has been sentenced to a four-year jail term, but is out on bail and remains firmly in control of her party. As the example of Laloo Prasad Yadav demonstrates, Indian political leaders are quite capable of controlling their parties from prison. Jayalalithaa is widely presumed to be capable of exerting such control from prison, if necessary.

to grant him a majority. The DMK had been the second-largest party in the last Congress-led coalition, but the alliance was one of convenience rather than real warmth—in the 1990s, the DMK supported the Sri Lankan separatist group that assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The DMK lost all of its Lok Sabha seats in the 2014 election, but the party has come back from electoral wipeout before—most notably, after two successive complete losses in 1989 and 1991.

Perhaps the only foreign policy position strongly demanded by either Tamil party is support for diaspora communities (see Table 6.5). This has historically been expressed on issues affecting the Tamil population of Sri Lanka, but given the large ethnic Tamil communities in Malaysia and Singapore, it might have an impact on India's relations with these Southeast Asian nations.

These and other regional parties based in South India could also have a growing impact on increasing the nation's involvement with ASEAN: As a Singapore-based scholar of the Indo-Pacific notes, "North Indian consciousness of India's heritage and history in Southeast Asia is marginal."[40] On economic issues as well, Southern parties may well step up their involvement. The TDP and TRS parties, based in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, respectively, may play an increased role in the future. In 2014, Telangana was carved out of the state of Andhra Pradesh, after a bitter campaign stretching back to colonial times. Both states now share the capital of Hyderabad—the city often called "Cyberabad," in testament to its place as one of India's foremost IT centers. With the IT sector fuelling a vital and increasing share of India's economy, and with the contentious issue of Telangana statehood finally resolved, the regional parties from India's Silicon

[40] Interview with senior scholar of South and Southeast Asia, 2013. It should be noted that ethnic Tamil communities in Southeast Asia, most of which are well integrated to their societies, may not welcome the intervention of Tamil Nadu–based political parties; if the Sri Lankan example is any indicator, however, the DMK and AIADMK parties will care much less about the impact of their actions on the Tamil diaspora than on voters in Tamil Nadu. For a description of the Thaipusam festival, celebrated annually by the Tamil community in Penang and elsewhere, see Blank, 2000, pp. 223–226. For description of the overseas Tamil conflict with the majority Sinhalese community in Sri Lanka, both historically and during the insurgency launched by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, see Blank, 2000, pp. 280–300.

Table 6.5
Indian Diaspora in Southeast Asia

Country	Nonresident Indians[a]	Percent of Population	Persons of Indian Origin[a]	Percent of Population	Total	Percent of Population
Malaysia	150,000	0.5	2,000,000	6.7	2,150,000	7.2
Myanmar	5,576	*	2,000,000	3.8	2,005,576	3.8
Singapore	350,000	6.5	350,000	6.5	700,000	13.0
Thailand	20,000	*	150,000	*	170,000	*
Indonesia	10,600	*	100,000	*	110,600	*
Philippines	70,000	*	1,024	*	71,024	*
Brunei	10,000	2.4	80	*	10,080	2.4
Vietnam	2,352	*	338	*	2,690	*
Cambodia	1,500	*	10	*	1,510	*
Laos	242	*	40	*	282	*
Total ASEAN	610,730	0.1	4,601,492	0.7	5,212,222	0.8

[a] Indian Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, updated January 2015. Population figures used for calculating percentages (2013): The World Bank, *Data: Population, Total,* website, undated.

Valley may involve themselves more in matters of international trade—particularly with such reliable IT/business processing operations partners as Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. IT and diaspora issues may be of particular concern in regard to Malaysia: the southern Indian cities of Hyderabad and Benglaru, whose populations have pluralities of Telugu/Telangana and Kannada-speakers, respectively, have more direct flights combined to Malaysia than does Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu (see Figure 3.1).

The small parties based in the seven states of India's Northeast are not major players on foreign or domestic issues. The total number of seats available in all seven states is only 28, and half of these are in Assam; no other state has more than 2 seats. By contrast, Uttar Pradesh has 80 seats in the Lok Sabha. The national parties are well represented in the Northeast; this is particularly true in Assam, where the BJP won half the state's seats in 2014.[41] In the case of a hung parliament, however, every seat may count—if the final tallies are very close, even a small party could be a Delhi kingmaker. It is unlikely that any of the Northeastern parties—or all of them combined—will have an influence on India's Southeast Asia policy equal to that of the larger regional parties. But the trickier the coalition math, the greater power the Northeast states might wield.

Impact of Domestic Politics: Likeliest Post-2014 Scenario Is Slow, Steadily Increasing Engagement

India's relationship with China is unlikely to sour to the point of outright conflict, and unlikely to warm to the point of close friendship. Given the probable continuation of Chinese expansion throughout Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean region, and Central Asia, India is likely to continue building up its security relationships as a hedge against potential

[41] Congress holds eight seats from Northeastern states, of which three are from Assam; the BJP also holds eight seats from the Northeast, of which seven are from Assam. The seats remaining are held by local parties; for example, the West Bengal–based CPI-M holds both seats from the state of Tripura. Nagaland's sole seat is held by a regional party in alliance with the BJP.

Chinese aggression. This attempt can be seen in purely regional terms: not wanting to let China dominate Southeast Asia, to India's exclusion. It can also be seen in broader pan-Asian terms: Indian presence in Southeast Asia can be useful in deterring Chinese attempts to expand into the Indian Ocean or Afghanistan—as well as to blunt Chinese support for Pakistan and deter Chinese aggression in disputed Indian territories such as Arunachal Pradesh or Ladakh. At the same time, India is unlikely to push security cooperation so quickly as to prompt a hostile reaction from China.

From India's standpoint, longstanding cultural and newer soft-power ties between India and Southeast Asia make closer engagement a historical inevitability. But Delhi may well be overestimating the importance of history or "natural fit" as a factor in political development—just because a relationship makes sense doesn't mean it will deepen without active investment of effort, funds, and political capital.

India's economic engagement with Southeast Asia is likely to grow, as India seeks to move up the production-value chain. Indian companies are already shifting some of their IT and back-office outsourcing work to Vietnam and the Philippines, and this trend is likely to continue.[42] How fast or slow, however, remains to be seen.

One of the drivers of India's quest for more engagement in Southeast Asia is a search for new sources of energy. India's energy needs are projected to grow and traditional sources are unlikely to provide good supplies. Southeast Asia is an attractive field for exploration—but unlikely to provide a significant alternate source.

While India's core interests in Southeast Asia are unlikely to change in the coming decade, the slow pace of engagement precludes any analytic assessment of the current policy as irreversible. To extend

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[42] According to the Bangalore-based consulting firm Knowledgefaber, India lost 70,000 call center jobs to the Philippines in 2012; the president of Aditya Birla Minacs, one of the largest call center operators in India, noted that transition represents a movement by his country up the value-added business food chain: "The talent in India has moved on to performing more and more knowledge-intensive, nonvoice processes." See "As Call Center Work Moves to Philippines, India Focuses on Non-Voice BPO," 2013. See also Posadas, 2009; and Pham, 2012.

the automotive metaphor employed above, India is driving toward Southeast Asia by a pathway resembling an Assamese highway during monsoon: The road may look straightforward on a map, but if the driver pushes ahead too slowly the vehicle could get bogged down in the mud and forced either to find an alternate route or turn back entirely. Since India's course in Southeast Asia has not yet built up enough momentum to force its way through potential obstacles, a brief look at possible alternate scenarios is in order.

Impact of Domestic Politics: Lower-Probability Alternate Scenario—Indian Pullback from Southeast Asia

The most likely cause for this would be increased focus on domestic concerns, although international factors could also lead to this scenario. Drivers for disengagement with Southeast Asia could include the following scenarios:

A sustained period of political uncertainty post-2019, with no party able to build and maintain a durable governing coalition: India's engagement with Southeast Asia has not yet reached the point where it is self-sustaining without high-level political attention. Such attention would be lacking in a fragile coalition government. If a coalition led by either the BJP or Congress were forced to rely on regional allies to support it against a vote of no-confidence, it would have little political capital left to devote to a Look East policy. Any Third Front government would be similarly constrained. In all of India's independent history only one government led by a party other than Congress or the BJP has served a full year; that one, led by the Janata Dal, was swept into power in 1977 in the wake of Indira Gandhi's disastrous "Emergency."

A downswing in India's economy: India's decision to engage with Southeast Asia was spurred partly by a desire to emulate the "Asian Tigers": the initial impetus for India to Look East came during a period of economic crisis. It was translated into concrete action, however, during a period of sustained growth: India's engagement with Southeast Asia, whether measured in terms of trade, diplomatic out-

reach or military interaction, grew most steeply during the years in which India's economy was booming. It is perhaps not coincidental that engagement seems to have flagged during the post-2009 years of global economic retrenchment. Some aspects of engagement are quite clearly dependent on the levels of funding available: if budgets for military exercises and for the staffing of embassies fall, security and diplomatic relationships ebb as well. Other aspects are affected by lean times in less direct ways: In times of anemic employment and financial hardship, political leaders may favor market protection over free trade agreements, and view neighboring countries as economic competitors rather than partners.

Sustained upswing in conflict with Pakistan: In order to precipitate a pullback from Southeast Asia, the conflict would have to be of longer duration or deeper intensity than the Kargil engagement of 1999, or the long standoff of 2001/2002. Such a scenario could be spurred not only by conflict *with* Pakistan, but also by conflict *within* Pakistan: If Pakistan were to experience sufficiently large refugee flows from Pashtun areas (whether in Afghanistan or in Pakistan's own Pashtun-majority Federally Administered Tribal Areas or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), the resulting internal tensions might not stop at the Line of Control. In such a case, India's military and diplomatic attention would shift to the Western front, leaving Southeast Asia as an afterthought.

Impact of Domestic Politics: Lower-Probability Alternate Scenario—Increased Sino-Indian Rivalry in Southeast Asia

If an Indian government emerges at some point in the coming decade that is highly confident, willing to break from past policies, and eager to lay a larger stake on India's role as a rising Asian power, it may decide to take a more confrontational attitude toward China in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Such a scenario could stem from either economic or security concerns.

Acceleration of Look East policy beyond China's comfort zone: If elections bring in a strong government keen to revive the

country's underperforming economy, New Delhi may decide to accelerate the Look East policy as a path to long-term growth. This would require some difficult political choices that could only be made by a government with a firm mandate: more funding for airports and other critical infrastructure projects, fewer subsidies to protected domestic industries, jettisoning of a raft of trade barriers.

Confrontation with China due to misunderstanding or poor signaling: The signals relayed by Beijing and New Delhi are not always received in the spirit intended. Any misunderstanding has the potential to spiral into a much broader confrontation, particularly if both parties are strongly confident of their military power and domestic political support. Such a scenario is more likely to be sparked by a Chinese action, such as the April 2013 incursion by PLA troops into India's territory in Ladakh, than motivated internally by a shift in Indian politics. India might misinterpret an action of China, or might overreact to what it believes to be an aggressive series of actions that Beijing may not have intended to be provocative. But India is unlikely to set out on a confrontational path unless it perceives itself to be responding to a clear and serious threat—even under the self-confident, assertive leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

One of the defining characteristics of India's security policy over most of the nation's history has been its *reactive* nature: Whether under the leadership of Congress, the BJP, or Third Front prime ministers, India has tended to direct much of its policy attention inward, and to base its security strategy largely on external events. A case could be made for regarding the BJP as being historically more proactive than Congress or Third Front parties, based on the Vajpayee administration's decisions to undertake the Pokhran-II nuclear tests and initiate the civil nuclear deal with the United States: Neither policy choice was the direct outgrowth of an external event, so both could be seen as an expression of proactive strategy rather than *ad hoc* response. A counterargument would apply the same standard to Indira Gandhi's decision to launch India's very first nuclear test in the absence of any clear provocation, and Rajiv Gandhi's decision to send the ill-fated Indian Peace Keeping Force into Sri Lanka's civil war in 1987.

Regardless of differences between the two major parties, however, the strong inclination of Indian policymakers has been to undertake serious changes in security policy only in response to external-forcing events. Such events in the past have included wars with Pakistan in 1948, 1965, and 1971 (also, perhaps, at Kargil in 1999); war with China in 1962; confrontations on the borders, with both Pakistan and China; terrorist actions such as Lashkar-e Taiba's 2008 attack on Mumbai; and China's "String of Pearls" port development projects in several Indian Ocean nations. Such external events are likely to be the paramount drivers of whatever shifts in security policy toward Southeast Asia might be made by Indian governments in both the Modi administration and in those that follow.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Key Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings[1]

1. **India's interest in Southeast Asia will have a significant impact on U.S. strategic planning.**[2]

   It has implications for U.S. policy of "Asian rebalancing." The U.S. "Asian rebalancing" is shaped by a desire to support partners and expand the U.S. role in the Asia-Pacific region. India's interest will be a major factor in other countries' calculations, and therefore in U.S. calculations as well. As India's Look East policy is implemented, the "Asia-Pacific" region will increasingly become the "Indo-Pacific" region, with India increasingly supplying niche capabilities to Southeast Asian militaries.[3] Moreover, India is *already* a military presence in Southeast Asia, through its bases on its sovereign territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; these bases are closer to Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia than they are to the Indian

[1] The key findings and recommendations in this report are in concert with those of a recent RAND study on China's strategic interest in Southeast Asia: Heginbotham, Rabasa, and Harold, 2013, pp. 31–32. The areas of greatest convergence lie in those findings and recommendations focused on the dynamic in Southeast Asia itself, rather than in broader observations or recommendations related to U.S.-India engagement.

[2] These findings are discussed in Chapter Two.

[3] The most important of these niche capabilities is servicing and training of Russian/Soviet military technology. Several ASEAN nations already receive such services, according to retired Indian military sources. (Interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013.) This niche will be a prime area of future expansion.

mainland, and India is actively expanding facilities for its navy, air force, and army.

It has potential implications on broader U.S.-India relations. Increased U.S.-India engagement on Southeast Asia can be viewed through the prism of not merely *challenge* but of *opportunity*. The interests of India and the United States are often at odds outside of Southeast Asia—for example, in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Russia, and on global issues such as trade liberalization and climate change. Cooperation in Southeast Asia (where the two nations' interests are more closely harmonized) presents a way of offsetting these points of friction, and of building up goodwill and trust to help facilitate the more difficult interactions elsewhere.

It could lead to modest burden-sharing, and potential cost-savings. While Indian burden-sharing in Southeast Asia is likely to be very limited in the near term, it could increase in the 15- to 25-year time frame. More immediately, increased cooperation in Southeast Asia could bring valuable cost-savings lessons to the United States—almost every military operation carried out by India is conducted at a fraction of what such an operation would cost the U.S. military.[4] Many Indian methods and practices will not be feasible for the United States due to safety and other concerns, but others could prove quite useful.

[4] For 2013–2014, India's defense budget is $37.4 billion—a sum almost identical to the amount subtracted from the U.S. defense budget in the 2013 sequester. Even after these draconian cuts, the United States will spend approximately 14 times as much money ($526 billion) on its military as India will spend on its own (larger) force. Behera, 2013.

2. **India's goals for Southeast Asia are in concert with U.S. goals for the region, and with "Asian rebalancing" more generally.**[5]

   India's big-picture goals in Southeast Asia can be encapsulated in three basic mission statements, all of them fully congruent with U.S. strategy:[6]
   - India seeks to maintain regional stability and prevent any outside power from dominating the region.
   - India seeks to secure maritime lines of communication such as the Straits of Malacca and sea lanes of communication through the South China Sea for international trade, and increase connectivity infrastructure for land, sea, and air transportation.
   - India seeks to ensure that simmering territorial disputes, including South China Sea claims, are settled peacefully.

These overarching goals are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. It is noteworthy that among virtually all sources interviewed and documents reviewed for this study, there was no significant disagreement on these three broad missions.

India's bilateral relationships and country-specific goals in Southeast Asia are discussed in Chapter Four. The most significant of these goals are all in accord with U.S. regional policy:

- India wants to see Myanmar continue its progress from a hermetic military dictatorship into a free and "normal" democracy.
- India wants Indonesia and Thailand to pursue democratic courses rather than fall back into military-backed rule.

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[5] These findings are previewed in Chapter Two. Chapter Three examines India's strategy from New Delhi's own perspective rather than—as set out here and in Chapter Two—from the U.S. perspective.

[6] Nearly every source interviewed in detail on this topic articulated some variant of these three goals; these sources included currently serving policymakers, retired flag officers of all three branches of the Indian military, retired diplomats, former top-level security officials, and scholarly analysts of Indian policymaking.

- India wants to see Muslim-majority Indonesia and Malaysia continue as tolerant, multireligious states in which extremist views are relegated to the far fringes of society.
- India wants Vietnam to continue its integration into the global economy, and to develop its military (including Russian military systems already serviced by India) as a local counterweight to China.
- India wants Laos and Cambodia to edge away from the gravitational pull of China.

In brief: Almost every principal Indian goal for Southeast Asia is shared by the United States.

3. **But the United States should not expect India to become an "ally," nor to join with the United States in an anti-China coalition.**[7]

Nonalignment lives. Nearly half a century after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, and even after the transition of power in 2014 from Nehru's Congress Party to the rival BJP, India's political culture remains wary of established foreign entanglements. "The U.S. wants India to sign foundational agreements but we don't like to do that," said one former diplomat.[8] Alliances, formal or *de facto*, are not in India's political DNA; from an Indian standpoint, an alliance tends to force less-powerful members into support for the leading power, and India is unwilling to play second fiddle to anyone: "We can be a partner, but never a puppet," said a retired flag officer.[9] This does not preclude a close relationship with the United States. As a former IAF flag officer noted, "in mil-mil cooperation, the U.S. is *miles* ahead of Russia, Britain, France—indeed any Western country."[10] Nor is India's reluctance to fully

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[7] These findings are discussed in relation to Non-Alignment and in relation to China in Chapter Three, and in depth in Chapter Five.

[8] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[9] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

[10] Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013.

embrace even a close security partner a recent phenomenon. Throughout the years when the Soviet Union was India's great-power patron, nonalignment was a deeply engrained attitude as well as a political façade. "There were 5,000 Soviet military advisors in India," said an IAF officer who commanded a MiG squadron during this period, "and I never met one of them."[11]

Distrust of the United States runs strong among Indian policymakers. The United States has many friends among India's policymaking establishment—but even those well disposed toward the United States remain suspicious of American motivations. "Is the U.S. a reliable supplier—or a reliable friend?" asked a former diplomat,[12] and the same question was asked by many sources interviewed. "India has no interest in becoming a 'major non-NATO ally,'" said another diplomat. "What we need is technology transfer, coproduction, and delivery on promises."[13] Many times, sources expressed fear that the United States would sell out India's interests in favor of those of Pakistan, Middle East nations, or even China. These sources were generally quite friendly to the United States. Among non-elite policymakers such as Third Front politicians, let alone the wider public, distrust runs even deeper.

India sees China as only a *potential* threat. Policymakers of all stripes are acutely concerned about the intentions of their powerful neighbor—but extremely cautious about taking any actions that might turn a *potential* hazard into an *active* one. Such risk-aversion is voiced more frequently by civilians than military officials, but those in uniform are also keenly aware that India cannot match China's military capabilities. Every act of cooperation between Indian and U.S. militaries is evaluated in light

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[11] Interview with retired IAF air commodore, 2013. The officer—who went on to mentor many top IAF commanders, noted that the only time in his active-duty career that he even met a Soviet officer was in Russia, when he was directed by the Ministry of Defense to give a lecture at a Soviet military academy.

[12] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[13] Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013. He noted that India will have to start producing arms rather than merely purchasing them—and doubted that the United States was ready to facilitate this shift.

of how it might be viewed by Beijing. Civilian policymakers in the Ministry of Defense and the Prime Minister's Office are said to be particularly cautious. "Fear of China's reaction is a huge restraint," said a retired IAF officer.[14]

In brief: U.S. and Indian interests are *congruent*, but U.S. planners should not expect the governments to act *in concert*.

4. **The main difference between U.S. and Indian policy toward Southeast Asia lies not in direction, but in *pace* and *planning*.**[15]

Indian policymaking is typically slow. A decade can be a long time in U.S. policy circles: longer than any presidential term, more than twice as long as a typical Secretary of Defense or Secretary of State will be in office. But, as a retired Indian general said, "Ten years for India is a very short time."[16] Because of India's parliamentary system, leaders' tenure in office can be very long: The two leaders who put the greatest stamp on India's foreign and domestic policy (Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi) served for 16 years each.[17] At the other end of the tenure spectrum, weak parliamentary coalitions can lead to briefly lived regimes and rapid turnover of leadership. In the 1990s, India saw seven changes of government in a period of seven years and four months.[18] Long terms can lead to a relaxed decisionmaking pace, while short ones can lead to policy paralysis; whether the leadership tenure is

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[14] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

[15] These findings are discussed in Chapter Three; a deeper discussion of the institutional pressures leading to slow foreign policy development is found in Chapter Six.

[16] Interview with retired Indian Army flag officer, 2013; interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[17] Nehru served his tenure all in one stretch. Indira Gandhi served two terms in office, separated by a Janata Dal interregnum.

[18] The first of these leadership changes occurred just before the 1990s, at the death of Rajiv Gandhi. Between December 2, 1989, and March 19, 1998, the following leaders served as prime minister: Rajiv Gandhi, V. P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, P. V. Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee (twice), H. D. Deve Gowda, and I. K. Gujral.

lengthy or brief, important foreign policy decisions tend to take a long time to gain political and bureaucratic consensus, and an even longer time to be translated into actual policy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hopes to institute a speedier policy implementation process by virtue of the fact that he is the first Indian leader in a quarter-century to hold a Lok Sabha majority without reliance on coalition partners; it should be remembered, however, that both Nehru and Indira Gandhi held far larger single-party majorities than Modi does now. This pre-1989 period of single-party rule was characterized by even greater bureaucratic inertia than has been the norm since the economic and governance reforms of the early 1990s.

Budgetary constraints are an additional impediment to rapid action. In American politics, defense spending typically enjoys wide political support; in India, security spending has few political champions. "We've been doing a lot more exercises year by year," said a retired IAF officer, "but they're costly."[19] Another retired officer said the political leadership sees military spending as a distraction from economic development and a drain of resources badly needed for domestic priorities.[20] Even when resources can be found, they are not necessarily spent well: While India has tripled its defense budget in the past decade, Cohen and Dasgupta note that "Indian military capacity does not seem to have increased in proportion."[21] USG policymakers should understand that whenever they propose an expert exchange, conference, exercise, or arms purchase, their Indian counterparts will be faced with the internal bureaucratic question, "Is this absolutely vital to

[19] Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013.

[20] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. He noted that funds could be found when necessary—for example, he put the cost of Indian participation in the USAF-sponsored Red Flag exercise in 2008 at $20 million; he noted, however, that it had taken five years for the IAF to recover from the diversion of resources. Another former IAF flag officer said the main impediment to swifter action at MoD was budget: "It's nothing nefarious." Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013.

[21] Cohen and Dasgupta, 2010, p. 144.

India's safety?" U.S. interlocutors must be prepared for "nonessential" event requests to be turned down, often with no explanation.

Indian strategy is formed without an overarching framework. Some observers see a stark divergence between the strategic approaches of Congress and BJP governments, but these ideological differences may not translate into policy outcomes. In theory, the Hindu Nationalist BJP may be explicitly committed to the unapologetic expression of India's military power on the world stage. In practice, however, the previous BJP administration of Prime Minister Vajpayee showed greater continuity than discontinuity with the security policies of his predecessors and successor. "We don't produce grand strategies," said a former high-level diplomat. "At most, we follow the grand strategy of Nehru."[22] "A lot of key decisions are case by case, each on its own merits," said a retired IAF officer.[23] Several sources cited bureaucratic inertia as a powerful driver. "We react, we don't force an issue," said a former diplomat.[24] A former Indian military officer described this tendency as "hyperrealism," saying that "for all its idealistic rhetoric, India always acts in its own short-term interests."[25] This approach seems applicable to most of Vajpayee's pivotal security decisions as well. The Kargil conflict of 1999 and the intensive military mobilization of 2001/2002 were forced upon him by the actions of Pakistan's military and of Pakistan-based terrorist groups, respectively.

India's reluctance to formulate grand strategy may stem partly from the very opposite of *realpolitik*—indeed, it may be

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[22] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[23] Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013. He noted by way of example that India exercises with militaries that have all types of equipment, with compatibility of gear and interoperability of procedures not really entering into the decisionmaking process as to whether or not an engagement is feasible.

[24] Interview with former Indian liaison to ASEAN, 2013. Two Singapore-based scholars also described India's policy as reactive rather than proactive, at most a hedging strategy. Interview with senior scholar of South and Southeast Asia, 2013; interview with scholar of South Asia, 2013.

[25] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

directly linked to India's Nehruvian idealism. Indian policymakers, as one highly regarded former flag officer put it, are uneasy with the prospect of coercion as a tool of statecraft: "We're uncomfortable using military or economic power."[26] This discomfort is not evident in top BJP leadership, and is certainly not a trait associated with Narendra Modi. But basic policy decisions in India are often made below the level of prime minister, by career bureaucrats who remain in place regardless of which party might be in power at any given time.

A lot of Delhi's policy regarding Southeast Asia is based upon the core premise that the relationship *should* be closer, and therefore it inevitably *will* grow closer. Indian sources interviewed routinely placed far greater emphasis than their Southeast Asian counterparts did on historical and cultural linkages between the regions, on shared values, and a Bandung-era legacy of developing nations supporting each other against the great powers of the day. A retired flag officer agreed that this worldview might account for some of the policymaking complacency: If one believes that India and Southeast Asia are destined to come together, there is less urgency to take action that would bring them together.[27] A former high-level policymaker saw the idealistic root of India's aversion to grand strategy going much deeper than Nehruvian nonalignment, back to the worldview of Hinduism—foreign policy, like everything in the cosmos, is shaped by *dharma* (the unchangeable laws governing the universe); relationships that *should* happen, *will* happen.[28] Indian policymakers are just as hardnosed and this-worldly as those of any other nation, but the cultural context

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[26] Interview with retired Indian naval flag officer and MoD official, 2013.

[27] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. He agreed with the proposition that the India-Southeast Asia relationship should be closer, for a wide range of sensible reasons. But just because something should happen doesn't mean it will happen: Indian strategists tend to think that because closer ties make sense, they will happen magically—therefore, nobody tries to make them happen.

[28] Interview with former senior Indian security official.

in which policymakers operate is a meaningful element in the decisionmaking process.[29]

India and Southeast Asia see the relationship differently. India's perception of its engagement with Southeast Asia differs markedly from the perception of many Southeast Asian players themselves. Just as Indian policymakers typically place more stock in shared history and culture than do their ASEAN counterparts, Indian sources interviewed tend to be more upbeat about the relationship than those from Southeast Asia. This divergence of viewpoint stems partly from *time frame*: Southeast Asia looks for progress over the course of years, while India looks for progress over the course of decades. "India has been doing nothing in Southeast Asia—but they think they have," said one Western observer sitting at the intersection of the two regions. Said another: "They [i.e., Delhi] have gone from 0.001 to 0.01, and they think it's progress."[30] The divergence, however, also stems partly from focus: Southeast Asia sees India primarily as a security partner, while India primarily sees Southeast Asia as a trade partner. A former Indian flag officer acknowledged that there was a significant gap between India's rhetoric and action, as well as between India's self-perception and that of Southeast Asian partners: "Yes, it's true—perhaps most significantly in Myanmar, but also elsewhere."[31]

Domestic constraints weigh against policy initiatives. India's policymaking is unlikely to become drastically swifter in the near term or medium term, although Modi will certainly try

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[29] Just as American policymakers tend to have reflexively positive associations with ideas like democracy and freedom (i.e., if a policy seems to spread these values, it starts off with a positive presumption), Indian policymakers often have negative associations with ideas that resonate of colonialism, hubris or domination (i.e., the suggestion that India seeks to shape the world to suit its own tastes—the very essence of grand strategy—has a negative connotation). Whether the policymaker in question leans toward Nehruvian nonalignment or Hindutva revivalism, the triggers of patriotism are likely to be located *within India itself*, and therefore not readily accessible to the formulation of grand strategy.

[30] Date and location of interviews withheld at request of interviewees.

[31] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013.

his best to institute a more decisive leadership style. The restraints to swift change apply to economic and diplomatic initiatives as well as security-related ones, and are not limited to policy toward Southeast Asia. As discussed in Chapter Six, there is a strong possibility that the political landscape of India after the next general election in 2019 will be dominated by coalition governments; these coalitions may often be weak, fractious, and largely preoccupied merely with keeping themselves in office. Whatever political capital the future prime ministers have may be spent on the demands of coalition maintenance. For India to adopt a security posture in Southeast Asia close to that desired by ASEAN policymakers, Delhi would have to make a serious commitment of funds, focus, and sustained top-level attention. The last time such an ambitious policy initiative was laid out was over two decades ago, with the Look East policy of Prime Minister Rao; it required the catastrophic balance-of-payment crisis of 1991 as its forcing mechanism, and arguably only began to be implemented long after Rao himself had retired.[32]

An additional constraint on rapid policy implementation rests within the walls of India's Ministry of Defense. U.S. policymakers are often utterly confounded by the seeming opacity of the MoD. They might be surprised to learn that their Indian counterparts are equally confunded. Comments by retired military and civilian officials include: "A black hole," "I've served there, and I don't understand the place," "just tax collectors and paper shufflers," "utterly risk-averse," "the bureaucrats there know nothing about the military," "understaffed, overwhelmed," and simply a resigned, "Oh, God."

Perhaps the most sympathetic explanation for the ways MoD makes its decisions came from a former policymaker in the security arena. In his view, the MoD provides exactly the sort of firm civilian leadership that distinguishes a democracy like India from barely disguised military dictatorships that have governed other

[32] For a discussion of the limitations of Rao's economic opening, viewed in terms of the Look East program, see Saint-Mezard, 2006, pp. 126–136.

states in the region. Security decisions are all political decisions: Every joint exercise, arms purchase, or port call has geostrategic ramifications that go far beyond any individual commander's area of expertise. Uniformed officers naturally do not appreciate this sort of tight control, but left to their own devices they would indulge in exchanges and war games with brother-officers from every nation they could—often upsetting delicate diplomatic balances that may have taken years to craft.

In brief: Indian policy toward Southeast Asia, while generally in harmony with U.S. goals and possibly ripe for invigoration under the Modi regime, will continue to be constrained by a slow, ad hoc, and domestically oriented process.

Recommendations

Strategic Level

The United States should practice strategic patience—constantly seek to increase its cooperation, but at a pace comfortable to India. U.S. officials dealing with India sometimes fall into the pattern (described above) of Indian officials dealing with Southeast Asia: They assume that because a relationship logically *should* be closer, it inevitably *will* be closer. At meetings between delegations, there is often much talk of shared values, common strategic interests, a natural partnership "the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy." Just as Indian interlocutors can be frustrated when their shared cultural ties do not translate to a warm embrace in Southeast Asia, U.S. interlocutors should not expect relations with India to blossom overnight merely because the soil is fertile.

The inauguration of Prime Minister Modi has again raised prospects of more rapidly growing cooperation between the United States and India. Bearish observers point to the U.S. denial of a visa to Modi in 2005, but bullish ones look to the burst of cooperation between the two nations during the previous period of BJP rule.[33] U.S. policymak-

[33] For discussion of both the bearish and bullish sides of the argument, see Tellis, 2014.

ers should be prepared for India to increase its cooperation, but at a pace more leisurely than many American observers might desire. To the extent that the United States can speed up the process, it can do so not by pressing for near-term deliverables, but by increasing the comfort level of Indian policymakers in America's long-term support for India's own goals. "You must proceed slowly," recommended a retired IAF air marshal. What sort of interaction is likely to avoid a veto by the Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Defense? Such interactions must be uncontroversial and inexpensive: "Don't focus solely on high-profile joint exercises and big sales. Engage through seminars, conferences, maybe some in India and some in Singapore."[34]

Strategic patience, however, is quite different from inaction. Only by steadily building up the relationship can the United States lay the foundation for much closer cooperation in the future. American officials should be willing to put in the effort and resources today for a benefit that might not accrue until the day after tomorrow. "Look at the Russians," said another IAF flag officer. "They've been paying their dues for decades," so they still supply 70 percent of India's military hardware long after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "The U.S. wants everything to pay off right now. But that's not how things work here."[35] In Southeast Asia, the United States might advance its long-term goals by supporting some of India's short-term goals.

The United States should prioritize cooperation with India on HA/DR in Southeast Asia. As discussed in Chapter Three, HA/DR may represent the lowest of low-hanging fruit: Humanitarian deployment is viewed as a core mission of the Indian military, hence the long tradition of Indian contributions to UN peacekeeping operations; such deployments tend to sit within the comfort range of Indian policymakers, and India is very proud of its transition over the past decade from a net recipient to a net provider of international disaster assistance. India

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[34] Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013.

[35] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. He noted that Russia continued to "pay it forward" through the recent transfer of a nuclear submarine. For source on transfer of submarine and 70 percent of hardware, see "Russian-Built Nuclear Submarine Joins Indian Navy," *BBC News*, April 4, 2012.

has the capacity to increase its HA/DR activities even further, particularly given recent C-17 and C-130J acquisitions. India's increased familiarity with these fixed-wing U.S. aircraft, along with such U.S. rotary-wing aircraft as the CH-17 Chinook, should facilitate collaboration with the United States and Southeast Asian partners in HA/DR operations.[36]

Moreover, HA/DR is an area in which cooperation with India may help the United States learn lower-cost methods of accomplishing the same missions. India's entire cost for its HA/DR efforts following the 2004 Asian tsunami were about $10 million—perhaps as little as 1 percent of what the U.S. military spent on its own efforts.[37] "We're good at humanitarian relief," said a former diplomat. "We can, and should, do more of it—on a multilateral basis."[38] India may be more willing to accept U.S. training in this arena than in more kinetic aspects of military operation. "We need to get better at precision-dropping of supplies," said a retired IAF flag officer. "If you drop food packets in the water, they go to waste. We also need more expertise on helicopter evacuation, as well as better surveillance, drones, and satellites."[39] He added that HA/DR was much easier for MoD to approve than joint exercises—humanitarian operations are politically less controversial, and much less expensive.

Even in the realm of HA/DR, however, cooperation will present more challenges than one might expect. India's HA/DR response does not follow a specific playbook: Each foreign humanitarian event is treated on its own merits, with the response formulated by top policymakers based on the geopolitical and domestic political conditions at the time. Officially, the military has only secondary responsibility for HA/DR.[40] As a practical matter, the most effective forms of disaster

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[36] For in-depth analysis of the HA/DR capabilities of nine Asian nations, including India, see Jennifer Moroney et. al., *Lessons from Department of Defense Disaster Relief Efforts in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-146-OSD, 2013.

[37] For sourcing and discussion, see Chapter Three.

[38] Interview with retired senior Indian diplomat, 2013.

[39] Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013.

[40] Interview with retired Indian Army brigadier, 2013.

assistance often rely on military transport and personnel—both IAF and Indian Navy, as well as Army helicopters.

Cooperation is unlikely to be seamless, and sequencing of events is important. Basic exchanges of lessons learned, such as sharing of information from recent military involvement in HA/DR operations, would likely be welcomed. This could be a bilateral activity with India (either joint or IAF-specific), or could be a multilateral exercise including other regional actors, both civilian and military. Sharing of lessons in a workshop/seminar setting can serve as a confidence-building and trust-building measure, and can lay the foundation for more robust activities in the future. These types of events tend to be relatively inexpensive—an important consideration for DoD, but even more so for India's defense establishment. The IAF flag officer cited in the previous paragraph urged slow engagement: first, seminars and tabletop exercises (perhaps at sites in Southeast Asia rather than India); then, war games and planning tools with HA/DR scenarios; and only then, field exercises with helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and naval vessels.[41] From the U.S. side, multilateral HA/DR can run into complications as well, since many of the skills needed for humanitarian relief are potentially dual-use. Food packets are not the only items dropped from an aircraft that could be targeted more precisely with better Global Positioning Systems technology.

One possible focus for such an exchange might be for Indian officials to share their lessons learned from one of the recent crises in which the IAF and other military services deployed. In the Asian tsunami of 2004, India became a net provider of HA/DR to its neighbors, including Sri Lanka and Indonesia; given the Indian government's lack of a single node for HA/DR coordination, how was the operation carried out? What lessons, if any, were applied to subsequent Indian HA/DR operations abroad during Cyclone Nargis (Myanmar, 2008), earthquake and mudslide relief (Indonesia and the Philippines, both 2006), and domestically during flooding that hit India's Uttarakhand State in June 2013? Other specific areas for potential lessons-learned exchange

[41] Interview with retired IAF senior flag officer, 2013.

include flood relief, food distribution, high-impact health crises (triage, mass medical), and the dispersion of ships and supplies.

Going beyond the sharing of lessons, the United States might be able to help India figure out a better way to designate (and then codify in doctrine) civilian and military roles and responsibilities for its foreign HA/DR operations. An October 2012 report issued by the Indian Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses calls for a more focused analysis of the mandate, mission, equipping, and training within the Indian military to undertake HA/DR missions. The report cites the 2004 tsunami as a case in point. HA/DR is an undesignated task for the Indian military. The National Disaster Response Force was created to free the military of this mission, but in reality this unit relies on the military for transport (air and sea lift) and other capabilities it lacks. The report, published by a think tank with very close ties to the Indian military, advocates working with other militaries to learn and share best practices.[42]

The United States should streamline the procedures for technology transfer to India. If the USG wants to support India's desire to serve as a balancer for (but not a bulwark against) a rising China, it should facilitate codevelopment and coproduction of military technologies. According to one retired Indian flag officer, the "the buyer-seller relationship is coming to an end." The window for shaping a partnership—that is, for building a closer security relationship with India that could result in an Indian policy *vis-à-vis* China that is more congruent with U.S. goals—will not remain open forever. "Unless you do it in the next ten years," the retired officer said, "the French and Israelis will come in and do it. And you'll lose out."[43]

Few conversations about security with Indian interlocutors proceed for very long without touching on the subject of technology transfer. For India, the issue of whether the United States is a "reliable supplier" of military technology is inseparable from the question of whether the United States can be a trustworthy partner in Southeast

[42] IDSA Task Force, 2012, pp. 38–39.

[43] Interview with retired IAF flag officer, 2013. For more discussion of technology transfer, see Chapter Six.

Asia. U.S. policymakers sometimes compartmentalize these questions and treat them as unrelated issues: We may or may not license a particular weapon system, but that has nothing to do with our desire to work together on antipiracy efforts in the Malacca Straits. For India, however, there is no such separation. The decisions taken on technology transfer will have a direct impact on the level of cooperation received in regional issues.

The issue of technology transfer has both a practical and a symbolic side. In practical terms, India is intent on building up its aerospace and arms industries, and if the United States is unwilling to license its technology for this effort, then Delhi will seek other partners. An example of this was the failure of both competing U.S. firms to be selected as finalists for India's $13 billion Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft tender in 2011. On the symbolic side, Indian policymakers consider the current restrictions a needless affront, an expression of fundamental lack of trust and respect. "There are weeks of delay just getting the Pentagon to approve the transfer of handguns," said a prominent Track II member.[44] His suggested remedy was one that merits serious consideration: the speedy implementation of the initiative led by former Secretary Leon Panetta and then–Deputy Secretary (now Secretary) Ashton Carter to remove as many licensing restrictions affecting India as possible; and, to the extent legally permissible, move from the presumption of denial to presumption of approval on technology transfer (i.e., generate a list of items that cannot be licensed by India, with any items not on the list presumptively permitted).[45]

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[44] Interview with participant in India-ASEAN Track II dialogue, 2013. Some interlocutors have suggested—only partially in jest—that it would be easier to take a taxi a few blocks from the Pentagon, and simply purchase their weapons from a Virginia gun shop.

[45] India's request can be summarized as, "Give us everything that you give a trusted friend, such as Great Britain." Implementing such a request, however, would be more difficult than such a formulation suggests. Britain, for example is a treaty ally—something India is highly unlikely to become in the near future. Certain items with both civilian and military uses are currently controlled the Commerce Department, and often have a presumption of approval. Strictly military items on the State Department's Munitions List, by contrast, fall under International Traffic in Arms Regulations.

The United States should work with India on a joint strategy for engagement with Myanmar. Of all the nations in Southeast Asia, Myanmar presents perhaps the greatest opportunity and challenge. After more than 40 years of isolation, the country has cast its doors wide open. This change has been recognized and powerfully supported by actions of the U.S. government, which recognized the enormous stakes by sending first Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and then President Obama on historic visits. India's interests in Southeast Asia run, quite literally, through Myanmar: As the only ASEAN state that shares a border with India, Myanmar is the geographic link by planned Indian-built roads, rail lines, and even a major port. The interests of India and the United States are in close harmony regarding Myanmar—both states want to see the nation fully integrated to the economy, politics, and security architecture of ASEAN. Both want to see Myanmar chart a course independent of its longtime Chinese patron, refrain from dangerous deals with North Korea, avoid the scourge of ethnic and religious violence, and consolidate a democratic, economically vibrant polity at peace internally and externally.

India is better placed than the United States to take the lead in forwarding these goals. For reasons of geography, history, culture, and cost-effectiveness, it would make sense to have India out in front and the United States quietly in a support role. Of necessity, much of that quiet support might take the form of funding—but funding Indian-operated programs would cost far less than comparable U.S.-operated ones. Uncontroversial areas for potential near-term cooperation include programs aimed at combating HIV/AIDS, drug-trafficking, illegal exploitation of resources, and trafficking in persons. One of the primary challenges for Myanmar is the creation of an effective civilian bureaucracy and the basic mechanisms of democracy. India—with a shared parliamentary system and administrative service inherited from the British—is uniquely well placed to provide assistance.

So far, India has not been particularly successful in translating these goals into concrete achievements. In terms of commercial presence, infrastructure development, and other metrics, India has fallen behind not only China but Thailand, the United States, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and perhaps even Vietnam in establishing a

presence in Myanmar. There is a significant gap between India's self-perception and the view of most other observers, with New Delhi seeing itself as playing a very active role and many others seeing it as under-delivering. This chasm presents an opportunity for the United States to help India increase its involvement. Virtually every Indian goal in Myanmar is also a goal of the United States.

The United States should help India modernize and expand its military bases on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. India's sovereign territory in Southeast Asia—the Andaman and Nicobar Islands—provide a potential area for increased U.S.-India cooperation. India is already operating at a triservice level here, and India's expansion of its security presence on these islands serves a number of U.S. interests: providing security to the Bay of Bengal; deterring piracy in the Straits of Malacca; preventing China from establishing a position of dominance through its presence in the ports of Kyaukpyu and Chittagong; hosting biannual MILAN exercises with ASEAN partners; and forward-positioning air and naval assets that could be used for multilateral HA/DR operations throughout the region. Moreover, access to Andaman and Nicobar bases could provide logistical and perhaps operational benefits to the USAF and USN in the future.

The United States should be willing to facilitate India's own plans for the modernization and expansion of the Andaman and Nicobar bases, without expecting near-term access rights as a quid pro quo. Delhi remains reluctant to grant such access, both for fear of how such a move might be interpreted by Beijing, and out of concern about potential domestic political backlash. Development of certain offensive capabilities (for example, positioning ballistic missiles on these islands) would likely be seen as a highly aggressive action by China, and such a move would only occur in an environment of greatly degraded Sino-Indian relations. India might be more receptive to engagement on missile defense and air-sea battles. The greatest opportunity for near-term cooperation might be in far more mundane capabilities: In March 2014, retired IAF Air Marshall Vinod Patni said radar facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar bases are not used continuously, and had significant gaps of geographical coverage. "I won't say that the Indian radars are

highly sophisticated in the region," he noted.[46] Given the relatively low baseline of capabilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, there is considerable space for development below the level that might set off warning bells in Beijing. The United States should offer as much assistance as India is willing to accept, while practicing strategic patience for a return on the investment.

Operational Level

The United States and India should give more thought to the current defense engagement relationship and consider developing a new structure that would be more appropriate to advance the bilateral relationship from both the Indian and the U.S. perspectives. One suggestion might be to consider the India-Russia structure as a model, where the Defense Minister chairs the meetings, and is thus invested in quickly solving problems by liaising directly with the other civilian MoD leaders. USG interlocutors should focus on areas where U.S. and Indian objectives overlap, and in areas where the United States can learn from India. These areas include

- HA/DR topics such as use of C-130Js to assist victims of earthquakes, landslides, and floods; flood relief and distribution; widespread health issues, such as triage and mass medical treatment; and dispersion of ships and supplies for maximum efficiency
- high-altitude warfare, making use of Indian experience operating in Himalayan ranges
- jungle warfare, with Indian personnel experienced in tropical conditions

[46] Air Mashal Patni's remarks were made to the Associated Press during the region-wide search for a missing Malaysian Airlines Boeing 777 passenger jet. Even an aircraft with such an easy-to-find profile—a large, unstealthy, civilian jet, lacking any technology specifically designed to evade detection—would not necessarily be located by India's current Andaman and Nicobar surveillance systems. "These are generally switched on and off as required," Air Marshal Patni said. See "Search for Lost Jet Expands Amid Signs It Flew On," Associated Press, March 14, 2014.

- tracking lower-level infiltration aircraft, making use of Indian experience in Kashmir and other areas in which terrorists have made frequent crossings.

USG policymakers should look for codevelopment and coproduction opportunities in areas where India has already acquired capabilities, like long and medium lift, and perhaps trainer aircraft. This could facilitate another type of medium-term cooperation: U.S. support for upgrading and development of Indian bases in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; codevelopment and coproduction are higher priorities for India, and might therefore help breed the trust necessary for greater U.S. access to Andaman and Nicobar bases.

USG interlocutors should pursue less expensive, "under the radar" engagement opportunities, as they will likely be more attractive to the IAF and civilian bureaucrats in the near term.[47] Examples of such engagement include subject matter expert exchanges, including those on topics of greater interest to India than to the United States; workshops, staff talks, tabletop exercises, command post exercises, modeling and simulations, and field exercises hosted in India, perhaps with USG contributing most or all of the funding.

USG should encourage professional military education opportunities, as well as increased opportunities for Indian civilian government officials to spend time at U.S. military academies through the Expanded International Military Education and Training program.

Since 1995, the Indian Navy has conducted eight MILAN multilateral exercises out of its Andaman/Nicobar naval facilities, with participating nations from Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean region, and even the South Pacific (New Zealand). It is not unreasonable, therefore, to propose a joint exercise based in the Andaman/Nicobar chain in which the United States might participate. From India's standpoint, understanding how U.S. forces operate jointly could be of great benefit: India's services often operate very well independently, but have

[47] For discussion of the Indian security establishment's institutional caution, and related issues which lay the foundation for the "go slow" recommendations on the following pages—that is, recommendations skewed toward forms of engagement such as personnel exchanges and tabletop exercises—see Chapter Six.

difficulty integrating modern tools to promote joint operation; closer observation of U.S. procedures might facilitate an Indian purchase of American military data systems.

USG policymakers should be aware that field exercises, although typically quite valuable to both sides, might not qualify as "under the radar" activities in the near term. One exception could be to propose something like a regional Red Flag exercise specifically for HA/DR. For this to succeed, it would be important for the IAF and USAF to develop a protocol or plan for IAF/USAF cooperation in HA/DR for Ministry of Defense and Prime Minister's Office approval. USAF could offer to formalize and codify the plan, including all activities, and share the lessons widely.

Modeling and simulation activities that game out certain defensive scenarios might also be politically plausible, even if the adversary clearly had the capabilities of China. Because tabletop exercises are easier to turn on (or off) with little advance notice, they could be scheduled with less advance notice than large-scale exercises such as MILAN or Cobra Gold. Another possibility to explore might be a major HA/DR exercise in the Indian Ocean and littorals—with China invited to participate. This could be structured as a trilateral exercise, or as a multilateral one with several ASEAN nations. USAF leadership should consider an agenda of discussions and activities with Indian officials focused on prime IAF objectives,[48] including

- future of air forces
- unmanned aerial vehicles/remotely piloted aircraft
- cyber operations/computer network defense.

Discussion of these topics, in which IAF has a keen interest, could facilitate discussion on topics of interest to the USAF, including

- nuclear safety and surety
- missile defenses
- operational resiliency in the face of cruise and ballistic missile threats

[48] For a retired IAF flag officer's view of the issues of most concern to IAF, see Chapter Two.

- anti-access/area denial and air-sea battle.

There may be opportunities for increased exchange of pilots and aircraft support personnel on C-130Js and C-17s. USAF should be willing to expand exchanges on India's terms (i.e., should not expect an immediate and reciprocal benefit), in the interest of fostering USAF-IAF ties.

PACAF, Headquarters Directorate of Operational Planning, Policy & Strategy (AF/A5X), and Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for International Affairs (SAF/IA) could partner with DoD Near East/South Asia Center to construct and then run a workshop focusing on lessons from recent HA/DR operations (e.g., use of C-130Js in earthquake relief is one topic for consideration). The workshop could be opened up to civilian Prime Minister's Office and MoD leaders, and used as the basis for developing a tabletop exercise on HA/DR. If it goes well, the USAF (AF/A5X and PACAF) could follow up with a USAF-led Building Partnerships Seminar specifically on lessons from HA/DR.[49] Moreover, if India accepts the U.S. proposal to set up formal Operator Engagement Talks (OETs), these could include an HA/DR lessons element as one of the initial areas of focus (though one possible shortfall of the OETs is that civilian MoD leadership is generally not invited to attend these meetings). In short, "rebranding" exercises as HA/DR should be one component of a broader public affairs strategy that seeks to minimize Indian press coverage of exercises, so as to create the maximum political space possible for military ties.

One area of natural codevelopment might be in areas related to C-130J and C-17 platforms. India's purchase of these aircraft was a very important step in the relationship, but India would far prefer to be a partner than a customer. The C-130J and C-17 do not present a clear threat to China, so India would be able to cooperate in codevelopment and coproduction of technologies related to these aircraft with greater comfort than it would in the case of strike aircraft (for example, fighters or bombers).

[49] The USAF has done two BP seminars with the IAF in the past, so there is a history and familiarity with these events in IAF—this one would just be focused on HA/DR specifically.

Space cooperation between IAF and USAF is subject to the authority of the Indian Space Research Organization. Therefore, USAF officials at all levels should be aware that their IAF counterparts generally do not have the authority to approve space cooperation, and therefore should not put space cooperation proposals near the top of the agenda in the near term unless there is a clear indication of support from the Indian Space Research Organization.

Concluding Thoughts

America's "Asian rebalance" remains a work in progress, with observers in the United States and around the world struggling to pin down precisely how this strategic goal will be translated into policy. In a time of shrinking security budgets, will the rebalancing occur without additional resources for Asia? Will it rely on tools such as diplomacy and trade more than on military power? Does the strategy boil down to something more substantive than a simple directive to "do more, with less?"

The answers to these questions cannot be successfully discovered without a deeper understanding of India's own intention to "Look East." India is the second-most populous nation in Asia, and projected by the United Nations to overtake China as the world's most populous by 2028. Its military is the world's third largest, and apart from the United States, it is China's only nuclear-armed rival. Whatever shape America's Asian rebalancing takes, India will inevitably be a significant element of the equation.

The region where much of this rebalancing will occur is Southeast Asia. Among the most economically dynamic regions in the world, geopolitically far more fluid than the states of North Asia, sitting astride sea lanes vital for commercial and military operations alike, Southeast Asia will be a prime field of competition for the United States, China, and other outside players. A rebalancing of U.S. engagement in North or Central Asia will occur within parameters that are relatively well understood. Southeast Asia, by contrast, presents a far more open field.

This report has attempted to cast some light on India's strategic interest in Southeast Asia, setting out what India sees as its own essential goals for the region, and discussing what sort of progress India has made in achieving these goals for each of the key Southeast Asian nations. It has briefly examined India's potential rivalry with China in the region, and the likely impact of India's domestic politics on the nation's policy toward Southeast Asian states including Myanmar, Malaysia, and Indonesia. As New Delhi's Look East policy comes into greater focus, U.S. policymakers will have to give increased attention to India's strategic interest in Southeast Asia in formulating an "Asian rebalance" that truly advances America's goals and global security. Given the congruence of interests between the United States and India, a better understanding by each nation of the other's goals, strategies, and domestic limitations should lead to closer cooperation in many parts of the world. This is the case in many arenas, but perhaps nowhere more strikingly than in Southeast Asia.

Abbreviations

ADMM	ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting
AF/A5X	Headquarters Directorate of Operational Planning, Policy & Strategy
AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (India)
AIFTA	ASEAN-India Free Trade Area
AITC	All-India Trinamool Congress
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Bbl	billion barrels
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BJD	Biju Janata Dal
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BPO	business process outsourcing
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CECA	Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPI-M	Communist Party of India-Marxist
DoD	Department of Defense

DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
DPG	Defense Policy Group
EIA	Energy Information Administration
ESG	Executive Steering Group
FDI	foreign direct investment
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
GDP	gross domestic product
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance/disaster relief
IAF	Indian Air Force
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
IDSA	Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INS	Indian Naval Service or Indian Navy Ship
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organization
IT	information technology
JDU	Janata Dal-United
LAC	Line of Actual Control
LNG	liquefied natural gas
LOC	Line of Control
mbl/d	million barrels per day
MCG	Military Cooperation Group
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
OBC	Other Backward Caste (India)

OET	Operator Engagement Talks
ONGC	Oil and Natural Gas Corporation
OPEC	Organization of Oil-Producing Countries
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PACOM	Pacific Command
PAF	Project Air Force (RAND)
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesia)
PLA	People's Liberation Army
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SOF	special operations forces
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TRS	Telangana Rashtra Samithi
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UMNO	United Malay National Organization
UN	United Nations
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
USAF	U.S. Air Force
USD	U.S. dollars
USG	U.S. government
USN	U.S. Navy
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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The global security interests of India and the United States overlap far more than they clash, and this is particularly the case in Southeast Asia. India's core goals for Southeast Asia are all in basic harmony with those of the United States—including regional stability; prevention of any outside nation from dominating the politics or economy of the region; peaceful settlement of territorial disputes such as the South China Sea; secure shipping through the Straits of Malacca and other crucial transit points; increased land, sea and air connectivity infrastructure; Myanmar's democratic transition; and containment of radicalism in states including Indonesia and Malaysia. But America should not expect India to enter any sort of alliance (formal or de facto), nor join any coalition to balance against China. This does not indicate an anti-American outlook, but a determination to engage with Southeast Asia at a pace and manner of India's own choosing—and a deep caution about precipitating conflict with Beijing. The replacement of a Congress Party government with a Bharatiya Janata Party administration in May 2014 has resulted in a recalibration of India's foreign policy, but not a radical shift in its overall direction. For U.S. policymakers in the security arena, the challenge in building cooperation with India in Southeast Asia will boil down to four elements: (1) understanding India's own goals for the region better, (2) adopting strategic patience in working at a pace and manner comfortable to India, (3) finding specific areas on which to focus attention, such as technology transfer, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Myanmar policy, and (4) moving forward, laying the foundation for future progress.

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