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AFTER THE FOUNDATIONAL AGREEMENTS: AN AGENDA FOR US-INDIA DEFENSE AND SECURITY COOPERATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S.-India defense and security relationship has continued to deepen, aided by robust political commitments in both countries and converging concern about growing Chinese assertiveness across the Indo-Pacific. The United States and India have expanded their defense activities and consultations, and recently concluded two additional so-called "foundational defense agreements," capping off a nearly two-decade effort by U.S. policymakers to formalize the legal sinews of operational defense cooperation. This positive trajectory is, however, by no means guaranteed to continue apace. There are rising concerns in the United States about India's fiscal limitations, its ties with Russia, its ponderous response to a pattern of Chinese provocations on its border, and its drift toward illiberal majoritarian politics. In addition, the Biden administration will likely seek, for good reason, to rebalance the bilateral relationship away from a disproportionate focus on security issues in order to address a wider array of topics including global health, energy and climate change, and technology cooperation.

In light of these dynamics, this paper presents a practical agenda for the next phase of the U.S.-India defense and security relationship — one that builds incrementally on the progress that has been made, responds to the changing regional security environment, and accounts for both governments' political and capacity constraints. It begins by arguing that the United States can do more to articulate its key priorities in engaging India on security issues: first, supporting India's rise as a constructive global leader and counterweight to Chinese influence; second, limiting China's ability to coerce India and other states in South Asia; and third, mitigating the risks, and enabling de-escalation, of inevitable India-Pakistan and India-China crises. It also makes a case for charting reasonably ambitious defense and security goals and avoiding crude conditionalities that would likely prove counterproductive.

The paper proposes, and explores in depth, six key priorities for cooperation: 1) situating defense ties with India in a wider bilateral and multilateral architecture; 2) driving a more holistic defense planning dialogue that periodically assesses the regional threat environment, identifies capability gaps, and helps to source those capabilities to the Indian

services; 3) reviewing exercises to prioritize high-end activities that could enable combined operations and low-end activities with third countries that are at risk of undue Chinese influence; 4) sustaining support for high technology cooperation and co-development efforts; 5) identifying opportunities to further institutionalize intelligence sharing; and 6) deepening consultations to mitigate emerging risks in the cyber, space, and nuclear domains.

The U.S. defense and security relationship with India is a modest but important piece of the Biden administration's wider Indo-Pacific agenda, and one that will require steady investment and recalibration rather than major redesign. Ultimately, the administration's defense ambitions with India will only be realized if it works to rebuild a broader bilateral relationship that is not disproportionately dependent on defense and security ties; is disciplined about setting and resourcing its Indo-Pacific priorities; is realistic about India's constraints; and is willing to invest in high-level engagement at the leader and Cabinet levels to sustain an ambitious agenda.

INTRODUCTION

At a time when American security partnerships around the world are under considerable stress, U.S.-India defense ties have continued to strengthen. Building on the efforts of the Bush and Obama administrations, the Trump administration acted with uncharacteristic diligence to advance cooperation on a range of security issues. Aided in part by a converging concern about growing Chinese assertiveness in the Indian Ocean and along the contested Sino-Indian continental frontier, the United States and India expanded military exercises, restarted and elevated a quadrilateral dialogue with Australia and Japan, and deepened consultations regarding China. They also concluded two additional so-called "foundational defense agreements," capping off a nearly two-decade effort by U.S. policymakers to formalize the legal sinews of operational defense cooperation.

These are significant accomplishments.[1] Yet even as defense ties have advanced, the overall bilateral relationship has become notably imbalanced, with other key areas of cooperation characterized by friction or indifference. Notwithstanding some positive developments in energy trade and private sector investment, bilateral trade negotiations have ground to a standstill, thwarted by the Trump administration's embrace of protectionism at home and a crude transactionalism abroad, as well as a renewed push in New Delhi to protect domestic industries. The seemingly warm relationship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump belied a notably unambitious agenda on global issues — consistent, perhaps, with the Trump administration's suspicion of multilateralism, but striking nonetheless when compared to the Obama administration's breadth of bilateral ambitions on energy, climate change, global health, cyber norms, and nuclear nonproliferation. And although people-to-people ties remain robust, with the Indian-American community garnering unprecedented attention in the 2020 election cycle, the structural irritants have arguably increased, most notably with the administration's anti-immigrant rhetoric and restrictions on H1-B and higher education visas that have disproportionately impacted Indians.

Even as U.S.-India defense ties have advanced, the overall bilateral relationship has become notably imbalanced, with other key areas of cooperation characterized by friction or indifference.

At the same time that security cooperation has become perhaps *the* principal load-bearing pillar of the bilateral relationship, a chorus of voices in Washington, from both the left and the right, have begun more vocally expressing anxieties about whether the value and sustainability of U.S. engagement with India have been oversold. For nearly two decades a reasonably strong bipartisan consensus has underwritten U.S. support for India's rise as a worthwhile long-term wager, even if the short-term benefits were modest. India's large population and rapidly-growing economy, resilient democratic traditions, and potential to serve as a counterweight to Chinese influence in the wider Indo-Pacific provided both a coherent rationale for the relationship and political ballast to overcome the inevitable weight of policy frictions. It is no surprise, then, that India's apparent economic stagnation even before the COVID-19 crisis, its ponderous response to a pattern of Chinese provocations on its border, its persistent defense ties with Russia, its underwhelming investment in the defense capital budget, and its drift toward illiberal majoritarian politics would raise legitimate questions in the United States about the future of the relationship.[2]

Some of these concerns are not particularly new but have merely garnered more attention in recent years as expectations of the relationship have risen, and India has touted its role as a rising global power. Others are at least in part symptomatic of a larger global malaise — the rise of nativism and the erosion of the U.S.-led liberal international order. Still others may prove to be fleeting, as India takes steps to mitigate the systemic risks that China's ambitions pose for an Indo-Pacific region free of economic and political coercion.

The new administration will, in any case, have to grapple with this newly complex set of centripetal and centrifugal forces acting on the bilateral relationship, the net effects of which are at the present moment unclear. Although the bipartisan consensus in support of U.S. engagement with India remains intact, the Biden administration will face keen challenges in trying to integrate a sincere values-based foreign policy with the increasingly stark geopolitical compulsions that arise from an assertive China; revitalize cooperation in areas beyond defense, including global health challenges posed by COVID-19; and demonstrate that the United States is, once again, a generally predictable and reliable partner on the global stage.

Even as the Biden administration works to tackle these wider challenges, it would be a mistake to presume that the positive trajectory in defense and security ties will continue apace with bureaucratic automaticity.[3] The purpose of this paper is to present a practical agenda for the next phase of the U.S.-India defense and security relationship — one that builds incrementally on the progress that has been made, responds to the changing security environment in the Indo-Pacific, and accounts for the political and capacity constraints faced by both governments.

The paper begins by arguing that the United States can do more to articulate its key priorities in engaging India on security issues, both as a means of focusing its own planning efforts and constructively shaping India's choices. It then contends that, while it would be a mistake to ignore the structural uncertainties that are clouding the relationship and fall back on the practiced hyperbole of past years, it would equally be a mistake to pull back from an ambitious defense and security agenda, or establish crude conditionalities that would likely prove counterproductive and limit the potential scope of cooperation against shared threats.

The main section of the paper outlines six areas in which the new administration, consistent with a focused set of priorities, can realistically advance cooperation: bilateral and multilateral security architecture, defense planning and platforms, exercises and operational cooperation, high technology collaborations, intelligence sharing, and mitigating emerging risks in the cyber, space, and nuclear domains.

The paper concludes by arguing that the Biden administration's defense ambitions with India will only be realized if it works to rebuild a broader bilateral relationship with India that is not disproportionately dependent on defense and security ties; is disciplined about setting and resourcing its Indo-Pacific priorities, particularly in pursuing effective competition with China and avoiding new dependencies on Pakistan; is realistic about India's political, fiscal, and capability constraints, especially in the near term; and is willing to invest in high-level engagement at the leader and Cabinet levels to sustain an ambitious agenda and address the inevitable array of bilateral frictions.

FOCUSING U.S. OBJECTIVES

South Asia is not a priority operational theater for the U.S. Department of Defense, particularly as the United States continues to draw down its forces from Afghanistan.[4] U.S. defense posture in the region is limited, and sensibly so.[5] South Asia does, however, occupy an important interstitial location between two other priority operational theaters — the Middle East and the western Pacific — and is clearly one of the most active new competitive domains in which China is rapidly expanding its influence. Chinese infrastructure and port investments in South Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), some of which may have military utility, its stepped-up diplomatic engagements, and the growing presence of the Chinese military in the region — including at its first-ever overseas base at Djibouti — should prompt the United States to invest in bolstering the capabilities of its partners to be able to recognize and respond to the risks posed by rising Chinese power.[6]

In this light, U.S. policymakers should consider three guiding objectives to focus defense and security engagements with India. The first, and broadest, should be supporting India's rise as a constructive global leader and counterweight to Chinese influence. This objective reflects the longstanding grand strategic premise that undergirded reengagement with India in the years following the 1998 nuclear tests, and U.S. efforts to facilitate a place for India in the global nonproliferation order and its leadership in multilateral institutions. As Ashley Tellis, one of the architects of the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal, has argued, facilitating India's rise requires recognizing that a strong India is likely, on balance, to be advantageous for U.S. interests, quite apart from the value of any specific forms of political alignment or security cooperation.[7]

A second key objective should be limiting China's ability to coerce India and other states in South Asia.[8] Pursuing a collaborative counter-coercion agenda with India is increasingly urgent given China's growing economic and military reach across the Indo-Pacific. India is presently faced with managing an active conflict on its continental border with China at the same time that the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is rapidly expanding its activities in the Indian Ocean. Even as the United States can and should support India in building the capabilities to deter and respond to Chinese provocations, the United States, India, and their partners can collectively do more to coordinate their activities with the aim of insulating small states in the region from the risks of political, economic, and military coercion from China.[9]

Third, and finally, the United States should focus on efforts to mitigate the risks, and enable de-escalation, of inevitable India-Pakistan and India-China crises. South Asia remains a crisis-prone region. The risks of a nuclear escalation between India and Pakistan are probably increasing; even as the threat from cross-border terrorism from Pakistan remains largely undiminished, New Delhi has opted for an assertive policy of conventional ripostes that could make future crises more volatile and unpredictable. There are also growing risks of crises emerging between India and China that span the continental and maritime theaters.[10] Moreover, the growing linkages among nuclear, cyber, and space capabilities mean that, if they are to be consequential, U.S. risk mitigation efforts with Indian partners may have to engage all three domains in an integrated fashion.

These three objectives are generally complementary. For example, facilitating India's leadership role in international institutions and partnership on global issues reduces the space available to China or other countries to monopolize economic or security ties with countries in the Indo-Pacific. And bolstering India's cross-domain capabilities to deter coercion by China has the benefit of reducing the risk of Sino-Indian crises. At times, however, these objectives will be in tension with one another. Military platforms, training, and information provided by the United States in the course of its broader efforts to help India become a more capable security provider in the Indo-Pacific might be used in ways that U.S. officials would consider unhelpful or escalatory in an India-Pakistan crisis. There are, as noted below, a few discrete policy areas in which U.S. officials have wrestled with these tensions in recent years.

A CASE FOR AMBITION

In considering these three objectives, U.S. policy planners also face decisions about how ambitious a defense and security agenda to pursue. On the one hand, there is a case to be made for setting relatively low expectations. India lacks the fiscal space and has to date lacked the political will to take bold steps to restructure its defense forces, outmoded force posture, and industrial enterprise, and much of its defense expenditure is tied down in supporting a large land army and the pensions that accompany it.[11] Additionally, Indian security planners face political pressures to further diversify India's global security partnerships and pursue greater self-sufficiency in defense production — two goals that, however understandable, will inevitably constrain opportunities for U.S.-India collaboration that require forms of exclusivity or mutual dependence.

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At a more fundamental level, some U.S. officials may worry about the wisdom of charting an ambitious defense and security agenda in light of their uncertainty as to the kind of partner that India will become. What if India becomes notably less liberal and democratic in the coming years? What if its economy founders? What if it becomes resigned to accommodating greater Chinese presence and influence in its neighborhood?

These may not be likely futures but they are possible, and when considered together with India's persistent structural constraints should make American defense planners cautious about setting unrealistic objectives or using lofty rhetoric that exaggerates India's potential capabilities or contribution to U.S. security interests.

Such concerns notwithstanding, there is a compelling argument for charting reasonably ambitious defense and security goals with India. For one, the underlying logic of the relationship remains sound. There is a reservoir of bipartisan support that has led the U.S. Congress to be proactive in pushing successive administrations to find ways to strengthen ties with India, even in spite of concerns over India's human rights and democratic practices. Barring dramatic changes in India or the region, the broad U.S. objectives and priorities described in this paper will likely continue to be relevant and receive support from U.S. political elites.

Moreover, the U.S. government has tools to respond in nuanced ways to recalibrate the relationship if that becomes necessary. If India were to seriously falter economically, there would still be scope for bilateral cooperation in areas that require only modest capital investment. If new human rights concerns were to arise, U.S. officials would likely address them privately, acknowledge them publicly, and look to adjust security cooperation in ways that were measured and proportionate to the particular concern. Setting ambitious goals has other advantages. Even during times in which progress is being made only haltingly, establishing clear objectives incurs relatively low opportunity cost, drives bureaucratic engagement on both sides, and creates the conditions for progress to be made when the political winds are favorable.

When I served at the Pentagon in 2012, U.S. policymakers launched the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI) and pressed for an ambitious slate of joint exercises and cooperative activities at a time when "interoperability" was a forbidden term in joint statements, negotiations on foundational agreements had stalled, much of the U.S. defense technology security bureaucracy was only beginning to treat India as something other than a potential liability, and there was significant bilateral turbulence on matters related to intelligence sharing. By 2016, both countries were publicly talking about cooperation on sensitive areas including anti-submarine warfare and the United States had designated India a Major Defense Partner and authorized technology-sharing on par with some of its closest treaty allies.

The completion of the four foundational agreements (now more commonly referred to as "enabling" agreements), after nearly two decades, tells a similar story.[12] The United States and India signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002, but talks on a Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) quickly ran aground.[13] It was not until 2016, after years of on-and-off talks, and frantic last-minute negotiations, that the LSA — rebranded as a Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) — was finally signed. Both governments finalized the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) shortly thereafter in 2018, followed by an important industrial security annex to the GSOMIA in 2019. The final major agreement, the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for Geospatial Intelligence, was signed in October 2020.[14]

Of course, charting an ambitious agenda does come with some risks; there have been notable missteps, including creating outsized expectations for DTTI specifically, and technology-sharing more generally, that generated political tensions and forced both sides to settle for more modest forms of cooperation. Neither does ambition alone

guarantee progress. The recent flurry of successes in establishing legal frameworks and practical forms of defense cooperation can be attributed in part to political shifts within India, to the leadership of particular policymakers, and to evolving threat perceptions regarding the regional security environment. It is, however, clear that this trajectory would not have been possible without sustained bureaucratic attention and high-level political support from within the American system over nearly two decades.

NEXT STEPS FOR DEFENSE AND SECURITY COOPERATION

Flowing from the three broad objectives described above, U.S. policymakers should focus in particular on six key areas of cooperation. These are not the only areas worthy of attention, but they are ones that are likely to support the new administration's priorities in the region and are consistent with the shared objectives outlined in the 2015 bilateral defense framework.[15]

I. Security architecture

First, the United States should work to situate its defense ties with India in a wider bilateral and multilateral architecture. The Trump administration leaned too heavily on defense and security issues to drive progress in the U.S.-India relationship. The Biden administration has an opportunity to remedy this imbalance with a broad-based engagement that returns to the table a full spectrum of important topics, including non-traditional security issues such as health security and climate resilience.

The "2+2" Ministerial Dialogue inaugurated in 2018, bringing together the American secretaries of state and defense with the Indian external affairs and defense ministers, has been valuable for addressing a longstanding asymmetry between the two governments — namely, that decisionmaking influence on key defense issues has largely concentrated in the U.S. system in the Pentagon, but in the Indian system in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Convening all four ministers, staffed by periodic preparatory intersessional meetings, has made policy planning on security issues more predictable and coherent. Establishing the 2+2 as the leading bilateral dialogue had the further effect of somewhat insulating defense and security issues from contentious disagreements on trade.

There are, however, some limitations to this new format. It risks over-securitizing the relationship and monopolizing diplomatic bandwidth to focus on defense issues at the expense of other priorities. More pointedly, perhaps, it risks marginalizing the economic coordination functions that are critical to any effective counter-coercion agenda in South Asia.

Given the large slate of important issues that the Biden administration will want to address with India — including health security and COVID-19 response, energy and climate, trade and investment, technology standards, and other regional and global challenges — there will no doubt be calls to revive some variant of the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue that was launched under the Obama administration, or a similar apex whole-of-government structure under which other dialogues would be nested.[16]

This raises the question of how to pursue a wider high-level dialogue without abandoning the productive 2+2 format. There is no simple solution. One option would be for the 2+2 ministerial to meet on the sidelines of a wider dialogue (which, on the U.S. side, would presumably include the secretary of state as well as possibly some combination of the secretaries of commerce, energy, and defense), though the scale of such a meeting could present scheduling challenges.

Another option would be for the 2+2 to meet separately from the wider dialogue to address key bilateral defense and security issues, but ensure that the whole-of-government discussions consistently included sessions on issues at the intersection of security, economics, and governance — such as investment standards, artificial intelligence, and supply chain security. Such an arrangement might push up against bureaucratic capacity limitations, particularly on the Indian side.

A third option would be to redesign the apex dialogue such that the secretary of state was a standing co-chair for the U.S. delegation, and the other co-chair alternated between commerce and defense. (This would be mirrored, naturally, on the Indian side.) On the off-cycle years in which defense was not a co-chair, the two countries could hold a defense ministerial dialogue. Regardless of which model is adopted, the importance of holding a single high-level dialogue may be obviated somewhat if both countries agree to convene annual leader-level summits, which in recent years have become a *de facto* norm. With summits scheduled well in advance, both bureaucracies could then hold a series of ministerial dialogues to drive progress for the leader-level summits.

The United States should also continue to enthusiastically invest in the so-called "plurilateral" dialogues in which it participates with India. After nearly a decade the U.S.-India-Japan trilateral dialogue has matured into an important forum for coordination on maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and defense-adjacent issues including 5G cellular technologies.[17]

The so-called Quad 2.0 framework, bringing together the United States, India, Japan, and Australia, has received exhaustive and perhaps undue attention — with some seeing it as a definitive harbinger of India's willingness to antagonize China, or as an effort to lay the foundation for an "Asian NATO."[18] While actively working to lower such unrealistic expectations, U.S. policymakers should work to leverage the group's comparative advantages, which can include collaboration on investment standards, supply chain security, maritime domain awareness in and around key sea lines of communication, and coordination of security assistance to countries across the Indo-Pacific.

Without formalizing a Quad secretariat, they can also work to institutionalize rigorous staffing of the meetings (with a "sherpa" structure like that used with preparations for the G-7) and thematic agendas to delve deeply into key issues. And they can encourage quadrilateral defense and security activities that complement, but are not formally attached to, the dialogue itself. Even if some U.S. strategists harbor hopes that the Quad might form the nucleus of some future quasi-alliance in Asia, it is in U.S. interests to let it develop organically rather than risk precipitating unnecessary political discomfort among any of the four participants.[19]

U.S. policymakers should also continue to encourage India's engagements with other high-capacity partners in East and Southeast Asia, most notably Australia, France, Japan, and Singapore; and countries such as Vietnam with whom India has unique collaborations on defense matters.[20] (U.S. officials should, likewise, encourage these

countries to pursue deeper ties with India.) Such engagements are likely to advance India's own capabilities. Although the United States probably has limited influence in shaping India's so-called "Act East" priorities, and should continue to support India's investment in the ASEAN architecture — including the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus — it would do well to encourage India to sustain its longstanding focus on investments in the South Asian theater and remain cognizant of the risks of overstretching its limited defense and diplomatic resources in the western Pacific.

II. Planning and platforms

Second, the United States should drive a more holistic defense planning dialogue with Indian partners that periodically assesses the regional threat environment, identifies capability gaps and, where relevant, helps to source those capabilities to the Indian services.[21] Mature defense partnerships are anchored in a common view of the threat environment and structured around a set of shared missions with a corresponding division of labor for carrying out those missions; those planning discussions then inform decisions about prioritizing capabilities and closing capability gaps; and those capability discussions, in turn, shape decisions about exercises, cooperative activities, and procurements.

While U.S.-India defense dialogues have deepened over the last decade, they do not yet reflect this ideal type, and are still disproportionately focused on lower-level platform- and exercise-specific discussions rather than the kinds of higher-level strategic discussions — for example, identifying shared missions related to deterring and responding to Chinese coercion in the region — that can then drive combined, cross-domain planning by two major defense partners.

Encouraging a more holistic defense dialogue focused on capabilities — and eventually, as the relationship matures, shared missions — will likely be a long-term effort. Bureaucratic asymmetries between the U.S. and Indian defense systems, together with underdeveloped joint planning functions within the Indian military establishment, will not be easily overcome.[22] India's capability requirements will also handily outstrip its comparatively limited defense capital budget for the foreseeable future, prompting difficult decisions about allocating scarce resources to deal with a wide range of regional threats.[23] Even senior Indian defense interlocutors often have limited influence in shaping these decisions, given the ways in which major procurements are sometimes made on the basis of political rather than purely technical considerations, and often privilege established platforms rather than disruptive technologies that could provide India a competitive advantage over its adversaries.

It is, however, precisely in the present circumstances — in which India's security environment is palpably degrading at the same time that its resource base is unexpectedly constrained — that capability-centric bilateral dialogues with close partners can be particularly valuable, especially if they focus on joint efforts to invest in next-generation technologies and offset strategies. These discussions should be encouraged in the Defense Policy Group (DPG), a longstanding apex defense dialogue that has regretfully been underutilized.[24] At the same time, U.S. officials should recognize that the most natural venues for capability-oriented conversations are likely to be those above and below the DPG level: the 2+2 dialogue at the political level, focusing on shared missions and a prioritized set of capabilities that India might pursue in order to carry out those missions; and the Military Coordination Group (MCG), a subordinate part of the DPG architecture that has atrophied in recent years, which is well suited to focus on aligning exercises, defense cooperation, and procurements to those shared priorities.[25]

Flowing from, and parallel to, these capability discussions, U.S. policymakers should continue to be proactive and confident about advocating for India to expand its installed base of U.S.-origin defense platforms, and those of America's close allies and partners. U.S. firms are well positioned to offer a competitive array of platforms — such as advanced fixed- and rotary-wing combat aircraft, including multiple options for the Indian Air Force's interminable fighter aircraft tenders; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs); and transport aircraft — in areas that India would be wise to prioritize, and that do not face significant competition from indigenous development initiatives.[26]

U.S. government advocacy for major defense sales not only benefits the American economy, but also has value in building future opportunities for interoperability, operational cooperation, and joint development. India stands to gain from deeper integration with a U.S.-led defense ecosystem. As many analysts have noted, effective military operations in the coming decades will increasingly demand systems that can be networked across domains, and draw on vast reservoirs of real-time data.[27] India's current force structure makes this difficult, as it has built a motley force ill-suited to the demands of future warfare. This is not to suggest that India should source all of its sensitive systems from the United States. But it may no longer have the luxury of piecemeal procurements of high-end systems without incurring real risks to military effectiveness.

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These trade-offs have come into focus with India's procurement of the Russian S-400 air defense system. U.S. officials warned their Indian counterparts that purchase of the Russian system could preclude cooperation with the United States on future advanced technologies and trigger reprisals under the 2017 Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).[28] The U.S. government has thus far wisely held those sanctions in abeyance while cautioning India against adding to its inventory of Russian platforms such as the Sukhoi Su-30MKI.[29] Precisely because of these concerns, U.S. officials should not shy away from entering into a serious dialogue with India about advanced systems such as the F-35 fighter aircraft. Although India's participation in the multinational F-35 program may never materialize due to U.S. technology security concerns, or India's own preferences and fiscal constraints, a bilateral dialogue about the program is a useful vehicle for highlighting the advantages of advanced U.S. platforms, clarifying for India the ongoing risks of its motley force, and exploring possible mitigation measures or mutual assurances that could make the F-35 or other cooperative advanced technology efforts possible over the coming decade.

The United States has, across administrations, demonstrated a willingness to approve a wide range of defense sales to India, and as a result there are likely to be few major policy questions regarding sales and transfers that will confront the new administration.[30] There were two principal areas in which, on policy grounds, the Obama administration restricted defense sales to India: ballistic missile defense (BMD), and armed UAVs, both of which were considered potentially destabilizing, particularly with respect to India-Pakistan dynamics. Both may now be less contentious than they were four years ago. With respect to BMD, the policy questions may be effectively moot now that India

has already procured (but not yet received) the S-400, and the U.S. government has approved sale of a U.S.-origin Integrated Air Defense Weapon System (IADWS) that, if finalized, would together with the S-400 and an indigenously-developed BMD system provide a layered defense of the National Capital Territory.[31]

On the issue of armed UAVs, the Biden administration will face a decision as to whether to review the Trump administration's policy announcement that effectively exempted the sale or transfer of long-range drones from the "strong presumption of denial" applicable to Category I systems under the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).[32] The unanticipated ways in which MTCR strictures had come to apply to drones had become both conceptually awkward for policymakers and commercially disadvantageous for U.S. firms. Although there does not appear to be much appetite to reverse this policy, any serious move to do so could scupper the negotiations presently underway for India to purchase a variety of UAV platforms produced by General Atomics. Moreover, Pakistan's reported procurement of a large number of sophisticated Chinese-origin UAVs over the last few years likely makes less salient the argument that U.S. approval of sales of armed UAVs would, on balance, be destabilizing in the India-Pakistan context.[33]

III. Exercises and operational cooperation

Third, the United States should conduct a review of the already-robust program of defense exercises with India, prioritizing, on the high end, exercises which build sophisticated Indian capabilities that could enable combined operations; and, on the low end, collaborative exercises with smaller countries in the region that may be at risk of undue Chinese influence or coercion. The United States already has a robust slate of military exercises with India, and regularly proposes more combined activities than the Indian military has the bandwidth to accept.[34] The U.S. proposals are shaped by a complex set of bureaucratic incentives (that is, the distinct and sometimes competing priorities of the various military services, combatant command, and civilian defense leadership) and a degree of institutional inertia.[35]

In general, bilateral exercises are on a positive trajectory with respect to scope and complexity. When reviewing the exercise program, U.S. planners should account for the overarching capability-based objectives that emerge from the DPG and higher-level bilateral dialogues, but should consider prioritizing two kinds of exercises. The first and most important are engagements that build high-end capabilities that could be useful in Indian efforts, and eventually combined operations, to deter or mitigate Chinese coercion against India in the South Asian theater.

These would include U.S.-India bilateral exercises, as well as multilateral exercises with countries such as Australia, France, Japan, and the United Kingdom. Both within and outside of public view, the U.S. and Indian militaries, particularly the navies, have been increasingly focusing on these high-end capabilities such as anti-submarine warfare, and crafting exercises that enhance interoperability. Many of these exercises, such as the high-end MALABAR series, are plainly designed to augment India's own efforts to bolster its maritime domain awareness capabilities along crucial sea lines of communication in the western and eastern Indian Ocean.[36] Combined air force exercises have lagged in recent years, and U.S. planners should compensate for their relative infrequency by seeking greater air force participation in standing exercises like MALABAR; and encouraging U.S. Air Force / Indian Air Force joint wargaming, simulations, and exchanges on issues that include both doctrinal and technical dimensions, such as airborne warning, conducting ISR in denied environments, and evaluating anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) strategies.[37]

With the recent signing of the additional foundational agreements, the two militaries should also craft their annual slate of exercises to practice and eventually routinize their use of the new logistics, communication security, and geospatial intelligence-sharing arrangements available to them — an objective which may helpfully highlight the need for follow-on arrangements or standardized operating procedures to take full advantage of the enabling agreements.[38] There is already a standing bilateral working group to carry out implementation related to COMCASA, but similar groups should be stood up on a priority basis for LEMOA and BECA.[39]

Complementing these high-end exercises, U.S. planners should consider as a second priority lower-complexity exercises that advance the shared counter-coercion agenda focused on preserving the independence of vulnerable smaller states in South Asia. Here the United States and India should explore infrequent but periodic trilateral exercises with third countries in the region, such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, or the Maldives, designed to build the capabilities of these countries to monitor their territorial waters and secure their interests, while at the same time sending an indirect deterrence message to Beijing.[40] (Alternatively, these countries could be included as observers or participants in existing bilateral or multilateral exercises, which might attenuate their concern about offending China.) India has historically been wary of U.S. security engagement with its neighbors, but this posture has gradually shifted in recent years.[41] Indian leaders encouraged U.S. efforts to reengage with the Sri Lankan military in early 2015 after Maithripala Sirisena's presidential election, and recently welcomed the signing of a U.S.-Maldives defense framework. Trilateral exercises sponsored by the U.S. and Indian militaries would be particularly valuable if undertaken in conjunction with a wider U.S.-India or quadrilateral effort to coordinate the provision of security assistance to countries in the region.[42]

The United States and India recently conducted their first tri-service exercise. While this new exercise certainly has value in building links across services and socializing U.S. joint planning techniques and procedures with Indian counterparts, its utility may be limited until the Indian political leadership addresses the profound lack of jointness in India's armed forces.[43] A more useful complement to the existing array of military exercises, perhaps, would be a series of combined interagency table top exercises (TTXs) focused on realistic regional scenarios, which would help to forge relationships both bilaterally and across civil-military divides.[44] Although Indian political and bureaucratic elites might be cautious about such an arrangement for fear that it could impinge on their institutional prerogatives, it could be conducted in the context of the civilian-led 2+2 dialogue (or its intersessional) and focus at least initially on humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HA/DR) or other comparatively benign contingency scenarios.

Exercises can constitute meaningful forms of cooperation in and of themselves, but it ought to be a medium-term objective of the U.S. defense exercise program with India to lay the groundwork for routine operational military cooperation. No U.S. policymaker should reasonably expect that the Indian Navy presently has the latitude to conduct a combined patrol with U.S. vessels in the Malacca Strait, or that the Indian Air Force can undertake coordinated reconnaissance patrols with U.S. Air Force assets operating out of the U.S. facility at Diego Garcia.[45] Nor is there any indication that Indian leaders are eager to set aside their longstanding reticence to participate in multilateral military activities not conducted under a United Nations aegis. Even so, there are ways to approximate or prefigure operational cooperation within the existing political constraints.

The gradually-expanding arrangements whereby Indian liaison officers are embedded at U.S. unified and subordinate unified combatant commands create new channels for visibility and consultation on operational issues that transcend exercises, and can be leveraged during crises. The signing of the COMCASA also reportedly enables for the first time the permanent installation in Indian facilities of CENTRIXS terminals that operate within a classified network enclave connecting U.S. and Indian defense systems.[46] These terminals have become commonplace over the last decade in coalition environments with dozens of U.S. partners in the Middle East, but if and when they begin to be deployed at scale in the Indian military it will dramatically simplify secure communications and situational awareness during exercises or any contingency operations that might arise.[47]

There may, additionally, be novel arrangements that provide a suitable political optic for Indian leaders to permit forms of operational cooperation. Admiral Arun Prakash, who served as India's chief of naval staff from 2004-2006, recently suggested that the four countries participating in the quadrilateral consultations could revive something akin to the Joint Task Force 536, which was stood up by the U.S. Department of Defense to coordinate relief efforts in the wake of the December 2004 tsunami, and in which India participated; and that this new HA/DR-focused task force could be hosted by India at Port Blair in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.[48] Such a move would, in addition to streamlining future HA/DR relief efforts, further elevate India's role as a security provider in the Indian Ocean and generate opportunities for the kinds of routine operational cooperation that would advance the Quad countries' counter-coercion objectives.

IV. High technology cooperation

Fourth, recognizing India's defense indigenization ambitions, the United States should sustain its support for high technology cooperation and co-development efforts, even if they provide limited near-term returns or risk cutting into future big-ticket defense sales. India has long pressed for transfer of sensitive defense-related technologies, and the U.S. government has in recent years taken a number of policy and regulatory steps to facilitate such transfers. Indian officials have at times been disappointed that, notwithstanding these steps, certain technologies remain off-limits — including some that the United States does not share even with its closest treaty allies — or are not viable candidates for transfer due to the lack of a business case for U.S. firms that own the relevant technology.[49]

These frustrations were compounded by the halting progress of early efforts to seed co-development and co-production through DTTI.[50] Some of the agreed-upon projects were embarrassingly modest; others, such as the joint working group on jet engine technology, proved to be too challenging in light of export control restrictions, and had to be set aside.[51] Others, however, such as the efforts on aircraft carrier cooperation, have progressed with apparent mutual satisfaction.

> **Tensions over technology transfer have arguably had a silver lining, in that they have helped to clarify some of the obstacles to deeper cooperation.**

Tensions over technology transfer have arguably had a silver lining, in that they have helped to clarify some of the obstacles to deeper cooperation.[52] U.S. officials, collaborating with congressional allies, have worked to privilege India in the export control regime, and provide more clarity on licensing sensitive technologies. For their part, Indian officials have taken steps to reduce (and,

in some future cases, eliminate) the burden of onerous contract offset requirements and, recognizing that foreign firms are reluctant to transfer competitive technologies to joint ventures in which they hold a minority stake, have gradually eased limits on foreign direct investment in defense, which is now authorized up to 74%.

Modi has made self-sufficiency and indigenization national priorities with his "Make in India" campaign, and more recently with his "*Atmanirbhar Bharat*" (self-reliant India) slogan. Defense has been one of the most visible sectors for this effort. Many American analysts and officials nonetheless remain skeptical that India can be successful at indigenizing across a wide range of defense technology sectors without significant international cooperation. Outside of a few areas such as ballistic missiles and select navy programs where Russia provided key technological support, India's track record on indigenous defense production is notably poor.[53]

It is unclear whether India's evolving national security architecture, with a chief of defense staff and strengthened National Security Council Secretariat, can provide a sufficient forcing function to ensure that the military services downgrade their requirements to accept less-advanced indigenously-produced equipment. Given the relatively small size of India's capital budget, government officials may also be overestimating the potential economies of scale that they could achieve through indigenous production. And Indian government efforts to attract foreign partners for co-development and co-production ventures have been marred by opaque regulations and significant policy instability — the latest version of the Defense Acquisition Procedure, for example, now has at least nine procurement categories, compared to only two in its 2002 antecedent.[54]

These potential limitations should, however, not stand in the way of U.S. efforts to support high technology cooperation. For one, technology acquisition is a key Indian bureaucratic and political priority in the bilateral defense relationship, and supporting it advances a spirit of mutuality that is important for the sustainability of the partnership. It also deepens supply chain integration between the U.S. and Indian industrial bases, which benefits both U.S. firms and the U.S. military by allowing them to access innovation from Indian researchers on a range of technology areas from advanced materials and sensors to cybersecurity.

With these aims in mind, U.S. policymakers should pursue steady and diversified efforts to advance technology partnerships and identify barriers to foreign direct investment in the Indian defense sector, recognizing that most of these efforts will flourish only with the meaningful involvement of private sector firms.[55] In addition to continuing DTTI joint working groups and consultations on future areas of cooperation, U.S. policymakers can take advantage of India's human capital advantages in promoting an innovation agenda that benefits both countries.[56] The partnership between the U.S. Defense Innovation Unit and Indian Defense Innovation Organization represents a promising start in this area, and is structured to advance both bilateral cooperation and defense indigenization. A joint U.S.-India innovation agenda would ideally include technology areas that are on the cutting edge of U.S. defense research, such as directed energy weapons, forward-deployed additive manufacturing systems, and quantum sensors for navigation in denied environments.

Both countries can also encourage cooperative research at the service level that might enable high-end combined operational activities a decade or two into the future. The U.S. Navy, for example, is presently pursuing a new warfighting doctrine known as Distributed Maritime Operations, which envisions a dispersed and survivable network

of surface, air, and subsurface naval assets that can adapt in real time in response to shared raw sensor data about the operating environment.[57] This nascent operational concept is worth discussing bilaterally in U.S.-India naval dialogues, but also integrating into DTTI or navy-navy research efforts on sensors.

Taking advantage of growing concerns shared by both U.S. and Indian leaders regarding China's ability to leverage commercial technology platforms for intelligence-gathering or potential military applications, U.S. and Indian policymakers should, lastly, give attention to forging partnerships in defense-adjacent sectors, including artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML).[58] The U.S. National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence recently proposed the creation of a U.S.-India Strategic Technology Alliance that could support joint research on AI/ML, but also facilitate talent exchanges and efforts to align investment screening standards.[59] Senior U.S. defense officials should urge their Indian counterparts to participate in the Department of Defense's International AI Dialogue for Defense, and build out collaborations on R&D and testing with like-minded partners such as Australia, Israel, Japan, and South Korea.[60] India's concerns about the risks of deploying Chinese 5G technologies also opens opportunities for sustained U.S.-India dialogue about setting compatible next-generation cellular standards for defense that could enable military interoperability in future decades.

V. Intelligence cooperation

Fifth, the United States should review the state of its intelligence sharing with India, with an aim to identify opportunities to further institutionalize cooperation. U.S.-India intelligence cooperation has matured significantly over the last decade, largely out of public view.[61] Much of the engagement is presumed to focus on shared counterterrorism interests, particularly the operations of transnational terrorist groups such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, and Pakistan-based groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad; and information exchanges regarding Chinese threats. The alignment of U.S. and Indian interests on these two principal subjects, together with a pattern of reciprocal exchange, has served to build trust in recent years.

Nonetheless, institutionalizing intelligence cooperation requires contending with natural structural challenges. The U.S. intelligence community regularly provides releasable indications and warning notices to its Indian counterparts under the "duty to warn" mandate, alerting them to possible terrorist activities or other major threats.[62] Apart from these cases, the exchange of human intelligence (HUMINT) tends to operate most transactionally as a trade game, predicated on mutually advantageous single exchanges rather than a set of structured policy guidelines. Signals intelligence (SIGINT) and geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) exchange have the potential to be more structured and even automated, as is clear from the sophisticated Five Eyes intelligence-sharing arrangement, but they too are anchored in forms of reciprocity which distribute the burden of collection or analysis.[63]

Given the contingent nature of most intelligence exchange, what can U.S. officials do to deepen sharing with India in ways that are mutually advantageous? An obvious first step would be for the new administration to review its internal collection priorities to ensure, for example, that the National Intelligence Priorities Framework (NIPF) managed by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) is adequately focused on the kinds of threats that China is increasingly posing to U.S. and Indian interests in the region. As I recently argued in a report for Brookings's Global China project, U.S. policymakers should be vigilant about the development of Chinese capabilities in the

Indian Ocean region that clearly overmatch benign mission sets such as counterpiracy; and about Chinese efforts to invest in resilient logistics and ISR platforms that could presage attempts to coerce state adversaries.[64]

As part of this review, U.S. officials can also work to identify all-source collection gaps related to South Asia that India might be well-positioned to fill. Reciprocity is at the heart of sustainable and structured intelligence exchanges, and by regularizing bilateral coordination focused on filling collection gaps, both countries could lay the foundation for more meaningful exchange. One relatively easy place to start would be collaboration on the collection and analysis of open source intelligence (OSINT), including but not limited to public documents in Chinese and other regional languages. OSINT often poses challenges of scale that are well suited to collaboration, while avoiding the risks associated with sharing highly sensitive information.

> **Reciprocity is at the heart of sustainable and structured intelligence exchanges.**

Identifying and addressing mutual collection gaps, which is already complicated by both countries' natural reluctance to reveal their own blind spots and risk exposure of sensitive sources and methods, may be complicated further by India's 2018 reorganization of its national security structure, in which it eliminated the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which had served as a key interlocutor for the U.S. ODNI.[65] It is also unclear what has become of the bilateral Strategic Intelligence Dialogue (SID), which once served as a forum for high-level analytic exchange. Given these institutional changes, ensuring that coordination on both collection and strategic-level analysis is on a strong footing should be a priority for the new administration.

With respect to substantive matters, there are indeed opportunities for deepened coordination on both of the principal topics of mutual interest: terrorism issues, and Chinese activities in the region. Regardless of the trajectory or ultimate outcome of the peace efforts currently underway in Afghanistan, both U.S. and Indian officials should prepare for the possibility that the militant landscape in Afghanistan and Pakistan becomes even more complex in the coming years.[66] Indian leaders remember well that the end of the Afghan jihad in the late 1980s marked the beginning of a new wave of Pakistan-sponsored militant activities in Kashmir in the early 1990s, and are rightly anxious about the prospect of a new generation of Afghanistan-based militants turning their attention to India.[67]

While U.S. officials will presumably continue to seek cooperation from Pakistan on dealing with transnational terrorist threats, the gradual decline in those threats emanating from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region that target the U.S. homeland, and the concomitant decrease in high-level U.S. attention on Pakistan — which began in the latter years of the Obama administration and accelerated under the Trump administration, culminating with the suspension of most security assistance in early 2018 — have made U.S. officials feel, at least for the time being, less encumbered than they once did by perceived dependencies on Pakistan. This may create space for somewhat more fulsome analytic exchange and cooperation on Pakistan-based threats. There is an existing mechanism, the U.S.-India Counter Terrorism Joint Working Group and Designations Dialogue, which brings together the analytic, operational, and legal experts on both sides. The U.S.

decision to leverage assertively its influence in the Financial Action Task Force to compel Pakistan to constrain the financing and public space available to militant groups reflects a newfound willingness by U.S. officials to discomfit Pakistan in pursuit of perceived U.S. security objectives that are shared — but not driven by — India.

With respect to China, public reporting suggests that the United States has been proactive in offering intelligence support to India to help it manage recent border crises.[68] The signing of the BECA, a broad framework agreement, enables both parties to establish more specific arrangements related to sharing classified and controlled unclassified information. The exchange of sensitive maritime information on subjects such as Chinese submarine transit of the Indian Ocean, and geospatial data pertaining to the disposition of Chinese forces along the Sino-Indian border, are two natural areas on which to pursue such arrangements.

VI. Mitigating emerging risks

Sixth, the United States should deepen its consultations with India, largely out of public view, to mitigate emerging risks in the cyber, space, and nuclear domains. The U.S.-India conversation on cyber-related risks has substantially broadened in recent years. A dialogue that was once largely focused on identifying and addressing network threats from malign state actors has expanded to include discussion of 5G technologies, AI/ML, and the security implications of various models of internet governance. India rightly sees itself as an important global player in these conversations.

The Biden administration has the opportunity to build on this strong foundation. During the Obama administration, the cybersecurity coordinator at the National Security Council (NSC) staff was a valuable interlocutor with India on a range of cyber-related issues, particularly given that the NSC's Indian counterpart, the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), has established a leading role on cyber issues for the Indian government. A decision to restore the cybersecurity coordinator or a similar role would helpfully recreate this institutional symmetry and, with it, a natural channel for sensitive high-level discussions. An NSC/NSCS-led dialogue is also well-positioned to bridge the gap between defense cyber institutions and internal security institutions (the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Indian Home Ministry) that are responsible for critical infrastructure. It could also provide leadership and oversight for sensitive defense cooperation on cyber issues. After years of deliberation, India in 2018 created a tri-service Defense Cyber Agency (DCA); U.S. Cyber Command is a natural interlocutor with this new agency on a wide range of defense cyber-related issues, including assessments of China's offensive cyber capabilities.[69]

Countering disinformation is an increasingly important challenge for open societies around the world, and it deserves a place alongside discussions of defense-related cyber issues. U.S. officials should look for ways to integrate consultations on disinformation into civilian cyber dialogues, wider bilateral or quadrilateral discussions, or global fora such as the proposed "Summit of Democracy." Ideally these consultations would address both technology policy questions that are faced by both countries (e.g., protecting vulnerable communities from the effects of misinformation), and issues related to foreign influence, though the latter may be challenging given that two of the leading foreign purveyors of disinformation in the U.S. domestic context are reported to be Russia and Iran,[70] countries with whom India enjoys close ties.

In the space domain, the United States and India have established modest but growing cooperation on civil space matters and are in the early stages of exploring bilateral commercial partnerships. While these activities continue apace, it is an opportune moment to pursue a more candid dialogue about space security. India's first successful kinetic energy anti-satellite (ASAT) test in March 2019 surprised the international community and raised questions about India's intentions and future capabilities in space.

India's ASAT test should prompt two kinds of engagement by the next U.S. administration. Recognizing that the underlying impetus for the test was unquestionably China's investment in ASAT capabilities that might neutralize India's own space assets, the United States should ensure that there is an active bilateral effort for exchanging intelligence information on China's increasingly sophisticated and diversified counterspace capabilities.[71] The U.S. and Indian militaries presumably share very similar concerns about the ability of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) to degrade command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) assets in a conflict environment. India will naturally want to retain autonomy over its own satellite and communications systems, but joint efforts on satellite resilience could be a profitable dual-track avenue of cooperation that benefits both commercial and military space assets.

Parallel to this kind of technical cooperation, U.S. officials should be using India's ASAT test, and global concerns about an arms race in space, as impetus for renewed engagement with India and other key spacefaring countries to, at a minimum, bolster norms against debris-generating events. This is likely to be a challenging diplomatic effort given the disparate views among China, Russia, the United States, and India. There are reasons to believe, however, that India could be a helpful partner in this effort.[72] Its relatively nascent capabilities may make it amenable to an agreement that puts constraints on China. And, as my Brookings colleague Frank Rose has rightly speculated, the timing of India's test suggests that it "probably wanted to ensure it had demonstrated a military capability to destroy a satellite before international prohibitions on testing were put in place."[73] The United States and India announced in 2014 a dialogue on space, which met in 2015, 2016, and again in 2019 just prior to India's successful ASAT test, and which provides a forum to explore a multilateral path forward on this issue.

Cooperation with India to reduce risks in the nuclear domain is a relatively underdeveloped dimension of the bilateral security partnership. On the one hand, U.S. and Indian officials have worked closely since 2005 to secure an exceptional position for India in the global nonproliferation order, a difficult effort that has built trust and a degree of mutual understanding about each other's civilian nuclear enterprises and nonproliferation commitments. On the other hand, India remains markedly adverse to discussing nuclear issues in bilateral fora. U.S. officials have, in private, noted that Pakistan is often more candid with the United States about its nuclear posture, doctrine, safety, and security practices than India is, and that while this arguably reflects each country's perceived incentives, the sometimes stilted nature of U.S.-India nuclear dialogues is increasingly incongruous with the trajectory of the overall security relationship.

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This will likely change only gradually, and U.S. officials should continue to approach these topics with a posture of discretion and reciprocity. Two issues in particular are worth engaging with some persistence. The first is Chinese nuclear developments and their potential impact on strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific. China retains a relatively recessed nuclear posture, but is investing heavily in new delivery systems, including a hypersonic glide vehicle that may be dual-capable, a new sea-launched ballistic missile, and multiple-warhead variants of existing land- and sea-launched ballistic missiles.[74] Some of these developments may eventually affect the credibility of India's deterrence posture. Indian officials have reason to be anxious as well about future U.S. posture and capability developments in the western Pacific that might degrade or disrupt Sino-American deterrence stability.[75]

There are existing U.S.-India channels to discuss strategic stability issues, but it is not clear that they are well suited to address the emerging threat environment.[76] The reality is that shared U.S. and Indian concerns about the Chinese nuclear enterprise are increasingly inextricable from concerns about the PLA's offensive cyber and counterspace capabilities, and that meaningful U.S.-India consultations on regional nuclear matters need to include these dimensions, and bring diplomats, intelligence analysts, and defense officials to the table.

U.S. leaders also need to sustain a quiet dialogue with their Indian counterparts about the changing nature of nuclear escalation risks with India's western neighbor. Apart from the Korean Peninsula, the India-Pakistan border remains perhaps the world's most likely site of a nuclear conflict. The Modi government, unimpressed by the restraint of its predecessors in responding to terrorist attacks linked to Pakistan, has pursued a new policy of conventional ripostes that have included special operations raids and air strikes into Pakistani territory.[77] Although the outcome of the 2019 Pulwama stand-off between the two countries has generally been read by both Indian and Pakistani officials as a notable success, many U.S. analysts are considerably less sanguine. They note that attacks by Pakistan-based militant groups on India continue unabated, and that India's new pattern of conventional responses appear to be increasing the risk of inadvertent escalation — providing political catharsis without any discernible deterrent to Pakistani provocation. (The Trump administration's nod of approval to India's cross-border strike arguably further increased this risk.[78]) There are also concerns that Indian leaders' understandable frustration with their limited conventional response options may be prompting them to consider the development of counterforce capabilities that would be both deeply destabilizing and exorbitantly expensive.[79]

U.S. efforts to deepen ties with India as a strategic partner and invest in its military capabilities will, to some extent, always be in tension with the United States' interest in preserving crisis stability between India and Pakistan. That said, the United States will likely continue to play a unique and unavoidable role as a crisis manager in any future India-Pakistan conflict, and should do what it can to urge restraint, mitigate escalation risks, and build relationships that could facilitate de-escalation. For this reason, it is arguably to India's advantage that U.S. officials sustain constructive ties with Pakistan so that they have an open line during future crises. The lingering discrepancy in U.S. and Indian views about the nuclear risk environment should, however, prompt further bilateral dialogue, and the United States would be wise to continue support to Track-2 and Track-1.5 engagements as well as pursue candid discussions in official channels.

The respective cyber, space, and nuclear agendas outlined here are each important for advancing risk reduction efforts in their particular domains. Although the U.S. and Indian bureaucracies might well be overtaxed in the near term by a cross-domain dialogue that addressed the growing interrelationships among these three issues, this could be a forward-looking area of investment for Track-2 and Track-1.5 efforts. Scenario-based dialogues or TTXs by domain and regional experts could help to identify realistic cross-domain escalation pathways and mitigation strategies that could then be taken up in official channels.

CONCLUSION

The Biden administration will inherit a daunting array of domestic and global challenges that will demand high-level attention from day one. The U.S. defense and security relationship with India is a modest but important piece of that wider agenda, and one that will require steady investment and recalibration rather than major redesign. Given the structural and political stresses on the U.S.-India relationship more broadly, U.S. policymakers should not take for granted that the positive trajectory will simply continue as a matter of course. That trajectory will be shaped in part by the choices that Indian leaders make about how ambitious they wish to be in aligning with the United States, and the kind of tradeoffs they are willing to accept in order to realize the gains from security cooperation. The new U.S. administration will also have a role in shaping the trajectory of the defense and security relationship. Any successful effort to do so will be predicated on four broad imperatives.

The administration would, as a first order concern, have to *rebuild a broader bilateral relationship with India that is not disproportionately dependent on defense and security ties*. This requires, as I argued above, considering revisions to the existing structure of dialogues, but also a wider effort to work with India as a leading partner in tackling global challenges from climate change to health security.[80]

This kind of wider agenda has a dual value. It reflects President-elect Joe Biden's plainly stated priorities: reaffirming a values-based foreign policy, reassuring close partners, restoring U.S. competitiveness, and reclaiming global leadership. And it recognizes that the American people stand to gain from a multifaceted relationship with India that includes robust economic and people-to-people ties. It also has the benefit of making more palatable to the Indian public a U.S.-India defense relationship that is increasingly visible and, at times, cuts against the grain of India's traditions of nonalignment. The United States must be able to sustain the argument that the U.S.-India partnership has the potential to be both deep and mutual.

Alongside this effort, the administration would have to *be disciplined about setting and resourcing its Indo-Pacific priorities, particularly in pursuing effective competition with China and avoiding new dependencies on Pakistan*. Notwithstanding its abundant failings, the Trump administration was right to frame its engagement in Asia in wider "Indo-Pacific" terms, and to pursue a more competitive relationship with China.[81] Crafting and resourcing a broad-based China strategy, in collaboration with Congress and other stakeholders, is arguably one of the most pressing tasks for the new administration.[82] Indian leaders will be closely watching to see the contours of this new policy approach and, so long as U.S. rhetoric on China remains firm but not overly combative, are likely to believe that a tough U.S. policy line toward China paradoxically gives New Delhi comparatively greater room for maneuver to sustain some political and economic ties with Beijing.[83]

India's willingness to make choices to deepen defense ties with the United States will also be shaped to some extent by the new administration's posture toward Pakistan.[84] There is no doubt that Pakistan will, and ought to, remain important for the United States. But the U.S.-Pakistan relationship has changed dramatically in recent years. The United States provides Pakistan a small fraction of the economic assistance it once did; virtually all security assistance has been suspended; Pakistan has moved even deeper into the Chinese economic and political orbit; and there is a healthy skepticism in Washington about efforts to alter fundamentally Pakistan's long-standing destabilizing policies vis-à-vis India. At the same time, Indians are understandably concerned that the United States will, irrespective of what happens with the Afghan peace process, revert to a co-dependent relationship with Pakistan as a means of compensating for the lack of direct access to counterterrorism infrastructure in Afghanistan. For U.S. assurances to the contrary to be credible, they will have to be accompanied by a demonstrable restraint, and willingness to pursue counterterrorism options that avoid undue encumbrances with Pakistan.

Even as it pursues a long-term investment in the relationship with India, the new administration would have to *be realistic about India's political, fiscal, and capability constraints, especially in the near term*.[85] The Modi government has been willing in many respects to signal publicly its alignment with the United States in ways that its predecessors did not, but has done so only within the context of an omni-directional foreign policy that does not require making difficult choices.[86] India's ties with Russia, which are anchored in its ongoing dependence on Moscow for defense equipment and supplies, its recognition of Russia's support in the U.N. Security Council, and its deep-seated fears of the emergence of a Sino-Russian condominium, will continue to constrain the possibility frontier of U.S.-India technology cooperation.[87]

One of the most salient enablers of deepening U.S.-India defense ties over the last four years has been Chinese President Xi Jinping's clumsily aggressive treatment of countries across Asia, which has markedly diminished China's standing and renewed fears of Beijing's hegemonic ambitions.[88] In this light, some commentators have suggested that the combination of the 2017 Doklam standoff and this year's Sino-Indian border crisis have precipitated a major rupture in trust and a fundamental shift in India's orientation toward China. But the Modi government's muted rhetoric tells a more ambiguous story, and should suggest to U.S. observers that India's posture toward China will likely continue to be marked by caution, concession, and contradiction. A more subtle Chinese approach, for example, in which Beijing pulled back from provocative border tactics and "wolf warrior" propaganda while proffering modest economic inducements, might conceivably prompt a new bout of Indian reticence about overt defense cooperation with the United States.

Apart from its political decisionmaking, India faced major fiscal and domestic political constraints on its ability to invest in defense capabilities even prior to the COVID-19 crisis. Absent bold economic reforms and a return to high levels of growth, these constraints will likely become only more acute in the coming years. The Sino-Indian border clashes have diverted Indian senior-level attention and resource planning to the continental domain at a time when China is more clearly than ever investing in sophisticated maritime capabilities in the Indian Ocean. Cognizant of these limitations, U.S. policymakers should encourage Indian planners to avoid overstretching their resources by carefully weighing the value of engagements east of Malacca and in the Middle East, and considering ways to pursue risk reduction measures and economize conventional force requirements vis-à-vis Pakistan.[89]

Finally, the Biden administration would have to *be willing to invest in high level engagement at the leader and Cabinet levels to sustain an ambitious agenda and address the inevitable array of bilateral frictions*. For differing but complementary reasons, Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris will each bring considerable personal credibility to their engagements with Indian leaders, and they have each been forthcoming and positive about their visions for deepening U.S. ties with India.[90]

Unless the Sino-Indian border crisis escalates in the spring as snow melts in high altitude border areas, India may not be a "day one" item for the new administration. But history would suggest that leadership by the president, vice president, national security advisor, and Cabinet secretaries is essential to driving progress in the relationship. Formalizing annual leader-level summits and planning a presidential or vice-presidential trip to India in the first year of the administration would immediately mobilize the bureaucracies to begin addressing the range of outstanding issues, including constructively situating the defense and security relationship in a wider bilateral and multilateral agenda. Past administrations have also benefited from informally designating a secretary- or deputy secretary-level official at the State or Defense Department to serve as a regular high-level interlocutor with Indian counterparts between ministerial engagements.

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Ultimately, these four imperatives for the new administration represent enablers, not guarantors, of a strong defense and security relationship with India that serves U.S. interests over the long term. Many of the most important factors that will shape the health of that relationship have less to do with specific U.S. defense or security policies, and more to do with the decisions that leaders in both countries make about how to navigate the complex array of political, economic, and strategic pressures being generated by the global pandemic, the weakening of both domestic and international institutions, and the rise of an assertive Chinese party-state intent on reshaping the Asian order.

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3 In this paper I use "defense and security" to cover the spectrum of military and traditional security issues related to terrorism and intelligence, but not including nontraditional security issues such as climate and health security, which are noted separately.

4 In this paper I refer to South Asia broadly as encompassing the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries and the wider Indian Ocean region.

5 See Walter C. Ladwig III, "Strengthening Partners to Keep the Peace: A Neo-Nixon Doctrine for the Indian Ocean Region," in *The Indian Ocean and US Grand Strategy: Enduring Access and Promoting Security*, eds. Andrew Dombrowski and Andrew C. Winner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 27ff.

6 For more on Djibouti, see Leah Dreyfuss and Mara Karlin, "All that Xi wants: China attempts to ace bases overseas," (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, September 2019), https://www.brookings.edu/research/all-that-xi-wants-china-attempts-to-ace-bases-overseas/; Zach Vertin, "Great power rivalry in the Red Sea: China's experiment in Djibouti and implications for the United States," (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, June 2020), https://www.brookings.edu/research/great-power-rivalry-in-the-red-sea/.

7 See Robert D. Blackwill and Ashley J. Tellis, "The India Dividend: New Delhi Remains Washington's Best Hope in Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 5 (September/October 2019), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2019-08-12/india-dividend.

8 This is what Arzan Tarapore aptly calls a "strategy of denial" in the Indian Ocean, focused not on excluding legitimate Chinese activities or presence, but precluding coercive capabilities and behaviors. Arzan Tarapore, "A More Focused and Resilient U.S.-India Strategic Partnership," (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, October 23, 2019), https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/a-more-focused-and-resilient-u-s-india-strategic-partnership.

9 The United States should also of course remain attentive to the prospect of India exerting coercive influence over its neighbors in ways that provide greater inroads to Chinese economic, political, and strategic investments in the region.

10 India sees China's expansive economic investments in Pakistan as a harbinger of an even deeper Sino-Pakistani relationship that could raise the risks to India of a two-front conflict. See Daniel S. Markey, *China's Western Horizon: Beijing and the New Geopolitics of Eurasia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 72ff.

11 See, e.g., Anit Mukherjee, *The Absent Dialogue: Politicians, Bureaucrats, and the Military in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Arzan Tarapore, "The Army in Indian Military Strategy: Rethink Doctrine or Risk Irrelevance," (New Delhi: Carnegie India, August 2020), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Tarapore_Ground_Forces_in_Indian_Military.pdf.

12 Mark Rosen and Douglas Jackson, "The U.S.-India Defense Relationship: Putting the Foundational Agreements in Perspective," (Arlington, VA: CNA, February 2017), https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/drm-2016-u-013926-final2.pdf.

13 Even though the LSA was, from the vantage point of the United States, a relatively simple, commonly-used, and unintrusive legal framework, it became a sensitive political issue for some Indian political leaders who worried that it might impinge on India's freedom of action.

14 The two countries also signed in October 2020 a Maritime Information Sharing Technical Arrangement (MISTA) to advance maritime domain awareness.

15 "Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship," (Government of the United States of America and Government of the Republic of India, June 3, 2015), https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2015-Defense-Framework.pdf.

16 The Strategic and Commercial Dialogue (S&CD), led on the U.S. side by the secretaries of state and commerce, was not without its own weaknesses; the ministerial-level events too often devolved into set-piece engagements reporting out lower-level meetings. A reimagined high-level dialogue should, regardless of what is done with the 2+2, seek to minimize perfunctory plenary sessions of this kind.

17 "Transcript of Media Briefing by Foreign Secretary after Japan-US-India Trilateral Meeting on the sidelines of G20 Summit," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, June 28, 2019, https://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/31514/Transcript_of_Media_Briefing_by_Foreign_Secretary_after_JapanUSIndia_Trilateral_Meeting_on_the_sidelines_of_G20_Summit_June_28_2019.

18 While some press reports refer to this grouping as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the participants themselves have generally referred to it more generically as "quadrilateral consultations." See Tanvi Madan, "The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the 'Quad,'" War on the Rocks, November 16, 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/11/rise-fall-rebirth-quad/; Tanvi Madan, "This Week's Quad Ministerial Meeting, in Four Charts," The Brookings Institution, October 8, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/10/08/this-weeks-quad-ministerial-meeting-in-four-charts/.

19 Perhaps the best exploration of what activities a more active Quad might undertake in the Indo-Pacific can be found at Abhijnan Rej, "Reclaiming the Indo-Pacific: A political-military strategy for Quad 2.0," (New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation, March 2018), https://www.orfonline.org/research/reclaiming-the-indo-pacific-a-political-military-strategy-for-quad-2-0/.

20 On the potential of the India-Australia security partnership, see Dhruva Jaishankar, "The Australia–India Strategic Partnership: Accelerating Security Cooperation in the Indo–Pacific," (Sydney: Lowy Institute, September 2020), https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/australia-india-strategic-partnership-security-cooperation-indo-pacific. On India-Japan, see Thomas F. Lynch III and James J. Przystup, "India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for U.S. Strategy in the Indo-Asia-Pacific Region," (Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, March 2017), https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/1112276/india-japan-strategic-cooperation-and-implications-for-us-strategy-in-the-indo/.

21 This proposal builds on earlier efforts during the Obama administration to organize more capability-centric defense dialogues, as well as a 2018 U.S.-India Task Force proposal to create "bilateral U.S.-India action plans that jointly identify the specific capabilities necessary for regional security contingencies and threats, and [move] forward to provide those capabilities to India." Nirupama Rao, Richard R. Verma, Yamini Aiyar, Alyssa Ayres, Shaurya Doval, Sadanand Dhume, Arunabha Ghosh, Lisa Gilbert, Anant Goenka, Seema Hingorani, Dhruva Jaishankar, Manjeet Kripalani, Sarah Ladislaw, Nur Laiq, Varad Pande, Roopa Purushothaman, Richard Rossow, Vikram Singh, Tom West, and Michael Fuchs, "The United States and India: Forging an Indispensable Democratic Partnership," (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, January 14, 2018), https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2018/01/14/444786/united-states-india-forging-indispensable-democratic-partnership/.

22 Many of the Indian military's perceived capability requirements are still generated bottom-up from the services rather than top-down from integrated defense planning staffs. Recognizing this reality, the Department of Defense might encourage its service war colleges to engage their Indian counterparts to pursue classified war games or scenario-based planning exercises related to countering Chinese coercion in the region. These would likely have to be authorized at the political level, but would be low profile and might bring into focus key service-level capability gaps that could be addressed by higher-level dialogues.

23 For a trenchant service-by-service assessment of the Indian military's capabilities and constraints, see Ashley J. Tellis, "India: Capable but Constrained," in *A Hard Look at Hard Power: Assessing the Defense Capabilities of Key US Allies and Security Partners—Second Edition*, ed. Gary J. Schmitt, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2020), 119–154.

24 For an overview of existing U.S.-India defense dialogues, see Cara Abercrombie, "Realizing the Potential: Mature Defense Cooperation and the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership," *Asia Policy* 26, no. 1 (2019): 127, https://www.nbr.org/publication/realizing-the-potential-mature-defense-cooperation-and-the-u-s-india-strategic-partnership/.

25 U.S. officials might consider various proposals to bridge civil-military disconnects in the existing dialogue structures, such as occasionally inviting the chiefs of defense (chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and chief of defense staff, respectively) to participate in parts of the 2+2 dialogue; and inviting civilian diplomatic and defense officials as observers at the MCG.

26 The Trump administration pressed hard for defense sales, though some of the major deals it announced had been in the pipeline prior to 2017. See Kashish Parpiani, "India-US Defence Trade Continuity Under Trump," ORF Issue Brief (New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation, July 2020), https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-us-defence-trade-continuity-under-trump-68919/. For more on the Indian Air Force's procurements challenges in particular, see Ashley J. Tellis, "Troubles, They Come in Battalions: The Manifold Travails of the Indian Air Force," (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 28, 2016), https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/03/28/troubles-they-come-in-battalions-manifold-travails-of-indian-air-force-pub-63123.

27 See, e.g., Ashley J. Tellis, "The Surprising Success of the U.S.-Indian Partnership," *Foreign Affairs*, February 20, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2020-02-20/surprising-success-us-indian-partnership.

28 The U.S. case was muddled by the fact that the United States pointedly declined to offer a comparable set of systems to the S-400 until after India had decided on the Russian platform. This episode merely underscores the importance of robust capability-oriented U.S.-India defense dialogues.

29 Jon Grevatt, "Update: US highlights CAATSA risk in Indian fighter procurement," Janes, June 29, 2020, http://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/update-us-highlights-caatsa-risk-in-indian-fighter-procurement.

30 See, e.g., Vikram Singh, "How to Keep the US-India Defense Relationship Moving Ahead," Defense One, August 7, 2018, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2018/08/how-keep-us-india-defense-relationship-moving-ahead/150342/.

31 "Transmittal No. 19-55: India – Integrated Air Defense Weapon System (IADWS) and Related Equipment and Support," Defense Security Cooperation Agency, U.S. Department of Defense, February 10, 2020, https://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/mas/india_19-55.pdf.

32 "U.S. Policy on the Export of Unmanned Aerial Systems," U.S. Department of State, July 24, 2020, https://www.state.gov/u-s-policy-on-the-export-of-unmanned-aerial-systems-2/. For a wider argument on MTCR policy, see Michael Horowitz, "Drones Aren't Missiles, so Don't Regulate Them Like They Are," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June 26, 2017, https://thebulletin.org/2017/06/drones-arent-missiles-so-dont-regulate-them-like-they-are/.

33 Franz-Stefan Gady, "China, Pakistan to Co-Produce 48 Strike-Capable Wing Loong II Drones," *The Diplomat*, October 9, 2018, https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/china-pakistan-to-co-produce-48-strike-capable-wing-loong-ii-drones/.

34 India reportedly exercises more with the United States than any other country, but U.S. exercises with India are quite modest in scale when compared to engagements with treaty allies, or even partners such as Singapore. See Sameer Lalwani and Heather Byrne, "Great Expectations: Asking Too Much of the US-India Strategic Partnership," *The Washington Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2019): 46, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0163660X.2019.1666353; Cara Abercrombie, "Realizing the Potential," 130.

35 The availability of U.S. military assets to participate in exercises or cooperative activities in the Indian Ocean will naturally also be shaped by wider decisions about U.S. force posture in the Middle East and western Pacific; as well as the relative prioritization, particularly for the U.S. Navy, of undertaking presence activities versus preparations for high-end conflict scenarios.

36 Darshana M. Baruah, "India's Evolving Maritime Domain Awareness Strategy in the Indian Ocean," in *India and China at Sea: Competition for Naval Dominance in the Indian Ocean*, ed. David Brewster (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

37 For a wide-ranging examination of potential models and topics for bilateral air force cooperation, see Stephen F. Burgess, "A Pathway Toward Enhancing the US Air Force–Indian Air Force Partnership and Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific Region," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 11–46, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/JIPA/journals/Volume-02_Issue-1/02-Burgess.pdf.

38 Notably, India now has logistics agreements with Australia, France, Japan, and South Korea, which should further facilitate high-end multilateral exercises.

39 The COMCASA-related working group is the U.S.-India Command and Control Compatibility Board (CCCB). See Michael R. Pompeo, Mark T. Esper, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, and Rajnath Singh, "Secretary Pompeo, Secretary of Defense Esper, Minister of External Affairs Jaishankar, & Indian Minister of Defense Singh," December 18, 2019, https://in.usembassy.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-secretary-of-defense-mark-t-esper-minister-of-external-affairs-subrahmanyam-jaishankar-and-indian-minister-of-defense/; "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 2700.01G: Rationalization, Standardization, and Interoperability (RSI) Activities," (Washington, DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 11, 2019), https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Library/Instructions/CJCSI%202700.01G.pdf.

40 There are likely to be natural limitations on such engagements, arising from U.S. human rights concerns, or residual Indian sensitivities about U.S. interaction with its neighbors. For example, the United States will likely face pressures to scale down defense cooperation with the Sri Lankan military in general, and the army in particular, now that the new Sri Lankan government is stepping back from the post-civil war reconciliation agenda of its predecessors.

41 For thorough accounts of U.S.-India engagement with smaller South Asian states, and the space available to deepen cooperation, see Constantino Xavier, "Converting Convergence into Cooperation: The United States and India in South Asia," *Asia Policy* 26, no. 1 (2019): 19–50, https://www.nbr.org/publication/converting-convergence-into-cooperation-the-united-states-and-india-in-south-asia/; Nilanthi Samaranayake, "China's Engagement with Smaller South Asian Countries," (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, April 10, 2019), https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/04/chinas-engagement-smaller-south-asian-countries.

42 The Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) has worked in recent years to share versions of its theater-level security cooperation plans with select allies and partners; regular coordination or deconfliction of security assistance efforts could be done bilaterally within existing U.S.-India defense channels, or quadrilaterally through liaison channels (if and when India sends a liaison to INDOPACOM).

43 Some reforms have been implemented, such as the creation of a chief of defense staff. But on the whole, the Indian services are not well structured for joint operations. See Anit Mukherjee, "Fighting Separately: Jointness and Civil-Military Relations in India," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 1–2 (2017): 6–34, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2016.1196357.

44 There is some early precedent for quadrilateral tabletop exercises. India hosted in November 2019 a quadrilateral TTX on counterterrorism issues, led by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), but it is unclear whether civilian or uniformed military officials participated.

45 On the politics of combined patrols, see Nilanthi Samaranayake, Michael Connell, and Satu Limaye, *The Future of U.S.-India Naval Relations* (Arlington, VA: CNA, February 2017), 15ff, https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DRM-2016-U-013938-Final2.pdf.

46 See V.K. Saxena, "COMCASA - The Bigger Picture," Vivekananda International Foundation, September 19, 2018, https://www.vifindia.org/article/2018/september/19/comcasa-the-biggerpicture; Ankit Panda, "What the Recently Concluded US-India COMCASA Means," *The Diplomat*, September 9, 2018, https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/what-the-recently-concluded-us-india-comcasa-means/.

47 See Abhijit Singh, "The Imaginary Fears Around COMCASA," *Mint*, August 8, 2018, https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/tOCVbJScokDup4VI4K9ALN/Opinion-The-imaginary-fears-around-Comcasa.html; Hi-Young (Heidi) Cotter, "Multinational Information Sharing (MNIS) Overview," (Fort Meade, MD: Defense Information Systems Agency, 2018), https://web.archive.org/web/20201018175251/https://disa.mil/-/media/Files/DISA/News/Events/Symposium/1---Cotter_MNIS_approved-FINAL.ashx?la=en&hash=C2682AD2066E65C215FD7C342E2BA2B3967F1DDC. Indian forces could, for example, be included ad hoc in Cooperative Maritime Forces Pacific (CMFP) secure enclaves for exercises or cooperative activities in the western Pacific. See Jose Carreno, Frank Bantell, George Galdorisi, and Russell Grall, "Enabling Multinational Communications with CENTRIXS," (San Diego: Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Pacific, June 2010), https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a525223.pdf.

48 Arun Prakash (@arunp2810), Twitter, October 8, 2020, https://twitter.com/arunp2810/status/1314364528755240962. Admiral Prakash's proposal does not necessarily reflect the government's current thinking on this issue. For detailed background on the post-tsunami HA/DR cooperation, see Nilanthi Samaranayake, Catherine Lea, and Dmitry Gorenburg, "Improving U.S.-India HA/DR Coordination in the Indian Ocean," (Arlington, VA: CNA, July 2014), https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/drm-2013-u-004941-final2.pdf.

49 Cara Abercrombie, "Removing Barriers to U.S.-India Defense Trade," (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 10, 2018), https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/01/10/removing-barriers-to-u.s.-india-defense-trade-pub-75206.

50 See Ashley J. Tellis, "Beyond Buyer-Seller," *Force*, August 2015, 8, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Tellis_Beyond_Buyer-Seller.pdf.

51 Rahul Singh, "US Suspends Cooperation on Jet Engine Tech," *Hindustan Times*, October 25, 2019, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/us-suspends-cooperation-on-jet-engine-tech/story-XZQglx93RecYudiIrT8cJL.html.

52 Dhruva Jaishankar, "Charting the Future of India-US Ties," *Hindustan Times*, October 15, 2020, https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/charting-the-future-of-india-us-ties-opinion/story-Mr52soREOdOBVzPuM30WKI.html.

53 See, e.g., Sumit Ganguly, "India's National Security," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2015), https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198743538.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198743538-e-11; Srinath Raghavan, "Military Technological Innovation in India: A Tale of Three Projects," *India Review* 17, no. 1 (March 29, 2018): 122–141, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14736489.2018.1415286; Dhruva Jaishankar, "The indigenisation of India's defence industry," (New Delhi: Brookings India, August 2019), https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-indigenisation-of-indias-defence-industry/.

54 "Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020" (Ministry of Defence, Government of India, September 30, 2020), https://www.mod.gov.in/dod/sites/default/files/DAP2030new_0.pdf; Amit Cowshish, "Will the Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 Make India Self-Reliant in Defence Production?," The Wire, September 30, 2020, https://thewire.in/government/dap-2020-india-defence-production-dpp-2016; Amit Cowshish, 'Decoding Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020," (New Delhi: Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, November 20, 2020), https://idsa.in/issuebrief/decoding-dap-2020-acowshish-201120.

55 Concurrent with the signing of the Industrial Security Annex (ISA) to the GSOMIA, the Trump administration wisely launched a public-private DTTI Industry Collaboration Forum, a standing body in which government defense production officials can hear from industry and provide guidance on procedures for collaboration. Implementation of the ISA, however, has proceeded slowly.

56 For examples of defense technology opportunities, see Aman Thakkar and Arun Sahgal, "U.S.-India Maritime Security Cooperation," (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2019), https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-india-maritime-security-cooperation.

57 See Kevin Eyer and Steve McJessy, "Operationalizing Distributed Maritime Operations," Center for International Maritime Security, March 5, 2019, http://cimsec.org/operationalizing-distributed-maritime-operations/39831; Bryan Clark and Timothy A. Walton, *Taking Back the Seas: Transforming the U.S. Surface Fleet for Decision-Centric Warfare* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019), https://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/CSBA8192_(Taking_Back_the_Seas)_WEB.pdf.

58 The United States and India already share a set of common values and concerns regarding AI, and are both founding members of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), launched in June 2020. "Joint Statement From Founding Members of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence," U.S. Department of State, June 15, 2020, https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-from-founding-members-of-the-global-partnership-on-artificial-intelligence/.

59 Eric Schmidt, Robert O. Work, Safra Catz, Steve Chien, Mignon Clyburn, Christopher Darby, Kenneth Ford, José-Marie Griffiths, Eric Horvitz, Andrew Jassy, Gilman Louie, William Mark, Jason Matheny, Katharina McFarland, and Andrew Moore, "Interim Report and Third Quarter Recommendations," (Arlington, VA: National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, October 2020), 24, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jg9YINagGI_0rid-HXY-fvJOAejlFliy/view.

60 "JAIC facilitates first-ever International AI Dialogue for Defense," Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, September 16, 2020, https://www.ai.mil/news_09_16_20-jaic_facilitates_first-ever_international_ai_dialogue_for_defense_.html.

61 For an account of some of the challenges, see Sumit Ganguly and M. Chris Mason, *An Unnatural Partnership? The Future of U.S.-India Strategic Cooperation* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 2019), 40ff, https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/an-unnatural-partnership-the-future-of-u-s-india-strategic-cooperation/.

62 "Intelligence Community Directive 191: Duty to Warn," (Washington, DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, July 21, 2015), https://fas.org/irp/dni/icd/icd-191.pdf.

63 Reciprocity is important for sustainable partnerships even when intelligence exchanges are, on account of the sheer size of the U.S. intelligence community, likely to be unbalanced.

64 Joshua T. White, "China's Indian Ocean ambitions: Investment, influence, and military advantage," (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, June 2020), https://www.brookings.edu/research/chinas-indian-ocean-ambitions/.

65 "Galwan Valley Clash: Defence Experts Question Dismantling of JIC, Say It 'Weakened' System of Assessing Intel," Firstpost, July 17, 2020, https://www.firstpost.com/india/galwan-valley-clash-defence-experts-question-dismantling-of-jic-say-it-weakened-system-of-assessing-intel-8608021.html.

66 See, e.g., Asfandyar Mir, "Afghanistan's Terrorism Challenge: The Political Trajectories of al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, and the Islamic State," (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, October 2020), https://www.mei.edu/publications/afghanistans-terrorism-challenge-political-trajectories-al-qaeda-afghan-taliban-and.

67 For an Indian assessment of the risks that it faces from Afghanistan, and potential options for mitigating those risks, see Rudra Chaudhuri and Shreyas Shende, "Dealing with the Taliban: India's Strategy in Afghanistan After U.S. Withdrawal," (New Delhi: Carnegie India, June 2020), https://carnegieindia.org/2020/06/02/dealing-with-taliban-india-s-strategy-in-afghanistan-after-u.s.-withdrawal-pub-81951.

68 PTI, "Ladakh face-off | Govt sources cite U.S. intelligence to claim China suffered 35 casualties," *The Hindu*, June 17, 2020, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/govt-sources-cite-us-intelligence-to-claim-china-suffered-35-casualties-during-galwan-clash/article31849492.ece.

69 The first meeting of the U.S.-India Defense Cyber Dialogue was convened in September 2020, but details regarding participation were not publicly released.

70 Betsy Woodruff Swan, "State report: Russian, Chinese and Iranian disinformation narratives echo one another," *Politico*, April 21, 2020, https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/21/russia-china-iran-disinformation-coronavirus-state-department-193107.

71 Ashley J. Tellis, "India's ASAT Test: An Incomplete Success," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 15, 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/15/india-s-asat-test-incomplete-success-pub-78884.

72 See Shounak Set, "India's Space Power: Revisiting the Anti-Satellite Test," Carnegie India, September 6, 2019, https://carnegieindia.org/2019/09/06/india-s-space-power-revisiting-anti-satellite-test-pub-79797.

73 Frank A. Rose, "India's Anti-Satellite Test Presents a Window of Opportunity for the Trump Administration," The Brookings Institution, May 10, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/05/10/indias-anti-satellite-test-presents-a-window-of-opportunity-for-the-trump-administration/.

74 "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020," (Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, September 2020), https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF; Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "The Pentagon's 2020 China Report," Federation Of American Scientists, September 1, 2020, https://fas.org/blogs/security/2020/09/the-pentagons-2020-china-report/.

75 In particular, Indian experts are likely to watch the development of U.S. counterforce and missile defense capabilities focused on China. See Caitlin Talmadge, "The US-China nuclear relationship: Why competition is likely to intensify," (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, September 2019), https://www.brookings.edu/research/china-and-nuclear-weapons/.

76 While there are good reasons for the United States to want to address the wider strategic stability challenges in Asia — for example, risks related to the China-India-Pakistan nuclear triangle — these are probably best engaged in Track-2 and Track-1.5 fora, particularly given the challenges related to discussing nuclear policy with the Chinese government.

77 See Frank O'Donnell, "Review Essay: Stabilizing Nuclear Southern Asia," *Asian Security* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 127–139, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14799855.2019.1620207.

78 Joshua T. White, "The Other Nuclear Threat," *The Atlantic*, March 5, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/03/americas-role-india-pakistan-nuclear-flashpoint/584113/.

79 See Christopher Clary and Vipin Narang, "India's Counterforce Temptations: Strategic Dilemmas, Doctrine, and Capabilities," *International Security* 43, no. 3 (Winter 2018): 7–52, https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/isec_a_00340.

80 For a summary of concrete policy proposals that reflect this broader vision, see Nirupama Rao, Richard R. Verma, Yamini Aiyar, Alyssa Ayres, Shaurya Doval, Sadanand Dhume, Arunabha Ghosh, Lisa Gilbert, Anant Goenka, Seema Hingorani, Dhruva Jaishankar, Manjeet Kripalani, Sarah Ladislaw, Nur Laiq, Varad Pande, Roopa Purushothaman, Richard Rossow, Vikram Singh, Tom West, and Michael Fuchs, "The United States and India: Forging an Indispensable Democratic Partnership."

81 The "Indo-Pacific" construct was an overdue recognition that the boundaries between South and East Asia were, on account of both economic and geostrategic factors, increasingly blurred. See Alyssa Ayres, "The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy Needs More Indian Ocean," Council on Foreign Relations, May 25, 2018, https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/us-indo-pacific-strategy-needs-more-indian-ocean; Joshua T. White, "Navigating two Asias: how Washington deals with the Indo-Pacific's rising powers," *India Review* 18, no. 4 (2019): 407–436, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14736489.2019.1662191.

82 This task will not be easy, given the comparatively low levels of U.S. funding for the Indo-Pacific relative to Europe and the Middle East. For candid views of the challenges of resourcing U.S. efforts in the Indo-Pacific, see Eric Sayers, "Assessing America's Indo-Pacific Budget Shortfall," War on the Rocks, November 15, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/11/assessing-americas-indo-pacific-budget-shortfall/; Stephen Tankel and Tommy Ross, "Retooling U.S. Security Sector Assistance," War on the Rocks, October 28, 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/reforming-u-s-security-sector-assistance-for-great-power-competition/.

83 Tanvi Madan, "For Delhi, US Election Result Is Consequential in Terms of How the Next Administration Approaches China," *The Indian Express*, October 26, 2020, https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-china-factor-6883178/.

84 Sumit Ganguly and M. Chris Mason, *An Unnatural Partnership?*, 27ff.

85 For a sophisticated analysis of the risks implicit in the "expectations–delivery gap" in U.S.-India relations, see Sameer Lalwani and Heather Byrne, "Great Expectations."

86 See Arzan Tarapore, "India's Slow Emergence as a Regional Security Actor," *The Washington Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 163–178, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0163660X.2017.1328931.

87 See Sameer Lalwani, Frank O'Donnell, Tyler Sagerstrom, and Akriti Vasudeva, "The Influence of Arms: Explaining the Durability of India-Russia Alignment," (Washington, DC: Sameer Lalwani, April 2020), http://sameerlalwani.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Lalwani-et-al-India-Russia-Paper-April-2020.pdf. As Vikram Singh notes, this should not prevent U.S. officials from urging their Indian counterparts to pursue greater interoperability with the United States by developing a plan to phase out Russian systems "at all but the lowest end where strategic issues are minor (like Kalashnikovs) and the highest end where changes are difficult (like BrahMos and other missile systems)." Vikram Singh, "How to Keep the US-India Defense Relationship Moving Ahead."

88 For polling which explores this trend, see Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang, "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries," (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, October 6, 2020), https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries/. For an insightful assessment of China's efforts to reshape the security architecture in Asia, see Lindsey W. Ford, "Network power: China's effort to reshape Asia's regional security architecture," (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, September 2020), https://www.brookings.edu/research/network-power-chinas-effort-to-reshape-asias-regional-security-architecture/.

89 As Elbridge Colby has argued, the United States should aid India "in focusing on the Indian Ocean Region, and in helping New Delhi support the autonomy of vulnerable proximate states like Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. This will allow the United States to focus more on the Western Pacific, where its efforts are most needed." Elbridge A. Colby, "Hearing on the Role of Allies and Partners in U.S. Military Strategy and Operations," (testimony, Washington, DC, September 23, 2020), 8, https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20200923/110884/HHRG-116-AS00-Wstate-ColbyE-20200923.pdf.

90 See Pranshu Verma and Jeffrey Gettleman, "Biden Is Expected to Expand U.S.-India Relations While Stressing Human Rights," *The New York Times*, December 24, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/24/world/asia/biden-india.html; Pranay Sherma, "India's Hopes for Kamala Harris," *The Diplomat*, August 24, 2020, https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/indias-hopes-for-kamala-harris/.

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