SINO-INDIAN STRATEGIC RELATIONS: ASSESSING THE RISK OF GREAT POWER RIVALRY IN ASIA

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EAI Working Paper No. 157

ISSN 0219-1318
ISBN 978-981-08-9795-6

Date of Publication: 4 August 2011

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The views of scholars, analysts, and policymakers regarding Sino-Indian ties vary as widely as the geographic areas that these two nations span. Some feel that a cooperative partnership will develop, much to the benefit of Asia and to the world as a whole. A few scholars have even gone so far as to suggest that China and India could eventually form an anti-U.S./Western bloc and thus greatly shift the global balance of power. However, more seem to adopt a realist approach and feel that a competition of some form or the other is inevitable given the sheer size and demand for limited resources of these two nations, both of which boast populations of over one billion. Within this group, some believe that the competition will be more of a friendly nature while others think it will be intense. In addition to these two schools of thought, there are a growing number of individuals who believe that China is actively pursuing an encirclement policy of India and that India has begun to respond in the same fashion, albeit not as effectively. This group views the simultaneous rise of China and India as a major challenge to regional and global stability that will require more sophisticated diplomacy. Whatever view one takes, it is clear that the geopolitical landscape of Asia has already begun to undergo a significant shift which is irreversible.

Core Principles of Chinese Strategic Thought and Practice

Chinese policymakers have crafted a foreign policy strategy that seeks to accomplish five specific objectives: promoting economic growth and development, enhancing reassurance, countering constraints, pursuing resource diversification, and reducing Taiwan's international space. This list of diplomatic objectives has expanded in the last decade as China became more integrated into the international community. China's view of its security environment now has two overarching dimensions. The first is the widely held belief that China's success is inextricably linked to the international community, more so than ever before. The second is the pervasive uncertainty about the range and severity of threats to China's economic and security interests.[1] For some, China has never been so secure and, for others, the numbers and types of security threats are growing, motivating deep concerns about the future. On balance, Chinese leaders have concluded that their external security environment is favorable and that the next 15 to 20 years represent a "strategic window of opportunity" for China to achieve its leading objective of national revitalization through continued economic, social, military, and political development. Chinese

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[1] Evan Mederios, "China's International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification", RAND Corporation, 2009.

policymakers seek, to the extent possible, to extend this window of opportunity through diplomacy.[2]

Harvard's Alastair Iain Johnston controversially argues that China actually has a sharp realist tradition that views war as a central component of inter-state relations, thus dismissing notions of China as a passive, defense-oriented state.[3] Though his point is debatable, it is clear that China, like any other states, pursues a grand strategy which is strongly conditioned by its historical experience, political interests, and geostrategic environment. Further, China's grand strategy is essentially linked to the attainment of three interrelated objectives:

- To preserve domestic order and well-being in the face of different forms of social strife

- To defend against persistent external threats to national sovereignty and territory

- To attain and maintain geopolitical influence as a major, possibly primary, state[4]

Swaine and Tellis claim that the recent era has seen the emergence of a hybrid "weak-strong" state security strategy which combines elements of a traditional "strong-state" effort to control the strategic periphery through military and political means with elements of a "weak-state" approach employing a primarily territorial defense-oriented force structure and a relatively high level of involvement in diplomatic balance and maneuver.[5] Scobell also notes that Chinese statesmen tend to be more willing to use military force while soldiers are inevitably more reluctant and provides a concise explanation of Chinese strategic thought:

> "…China's strategic culture does not reflect a single defensive, conflict-averse tradition symbolized by the Great Wall, and that post-1949 China's civil-military structure is not as harmonious or as one-dimensional as the Long March suggests. China's military and civilian leaders do not approach decisions to use force at home or abroad from a single perspective. Rather, China's strategic behavior is more accurately conceived of as the outcome of the interplay between two distinct and enduring strands of strategic culture that are filtered

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Spring 1995.
Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, Princeton University Press, 1995.
Originally cited in Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force – Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[4] Michael Swaine and Ashley Tellis, "Interpreting China's Grand Strategy – Past, Present, and Future", RAND Corporation, 2000, page X.

[5] Ibid.

through an evolving civil-military structure tempered by military culture."[6]

There are few direct, immediate external threats to China today that require preparation. However, there are still several potential threats that concern the Chinese civilian and military leadership with the principal threat being assumed by the United States as it is viewed as a long term threat to China's rise to great power status. In the short term, the U.S. is believed to pose a potential threat to China's territorial integrity through its support for Taiwan prior to a peaceful resolution of the situation in the Strait. The U.S. involvement in a Taiwan conflict scenario also interacts with other external security threats, such as China's perceived vulnerability regarding energy security and the security of its sea lines of communication (SLOCs). Any disruptions to China's access to sea lanes, and Chinese energy imports in particular, is believed to have the potential of greatly harming the continued growth of China's economy and undermining one of the key sources of legitimacy for the continued rule of the CCP.[7] Other external security challenges facing Beijing include border, island, and offshore mineral rights disputes that threaten the territorial integrity of China, and other non-traditional security threats like the international narcotics trade and regional instability that could negatively impact the regional environment or even cause refugee flows into China.[8] Other nontraditional security issues include terrorism, arms control, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and environmental issues. PLA writings have indicated an awareness of transnational topics that could be sources of instability that threaten China's national security interests.[9]

Although Beijing's assessment of its regional security is generally positive, it should be noted that major Chinese public assessments of the international security environment can change quickly and are not reliable indicators of the long term perceptions of Chinese military planners. In particular, the tone of Chinese assessments of the international security environment tends to shift according to the overall political climate in U.S.-China relations.[10] Further, China's perception of its threat environment is in a period of gradual expansion as it is beginning to accommodate considerations beyond merely border and territorial defense. The rise of China as a global economic and trading partner is forcing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to analyze interests that are more distant than previously considered.[11] Protection of Chinese energy and other ocean-going cargo along the SLOCs in Southeast Asia even from ports as far off as the Persian Gulf as well as protection of Chinese energy industry assets in Central Asia or further afield, such as Sudan, is

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6 Scobell, 2003, p. 2.

7 Michael Chambers, "Framing the Problem: China's Threat Environment and International Obligations", in *Right Sizing the People's Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China's Military*, ed. Roy Kamphausen and Andrew Scobell, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, September 2007, pp. 19-69.

8 Ibid.

9 Keith Crane, *et. al.*, "Modernizing China's Military – Opportunities and Constraints", RAND Corporation, 2005.

10 Ibid.

11 Chambers, 2007.

increasingly shaping the longer term vision for modernizing the PLA. In addition, China may come to feel the need to provide stability throughout the Asia-Pacific region if it is to become a great power. These ambitions will require China to develop power-projection capabilities that are well beyond those currently possessed by the PLA.[12]

Johnston notes that with more rigorous criteria for determining whether a state's foreign policy is status quo or revisionist oriented than heretofore have been used in international relations theorizing, it is hard to conclude that China is a clearly revisionist state operating outside, or barely inside, the boundaries of a so-called international community. Rather, to the extent that we can identify an international community on major global issues, China has become more integrated into and more cooperative within international institutions than ever before.[13] Moreover, the evidence that China's leaders are actively trying to balance against U.S. power to undermine an American-dominated unipolar system and replace it with a multipolar system is murky. The multipolarity discourse is not a clear guide to understanding Chinese preferences, and behaviorally it does not appear at the moment that China is balancing very vigorously against American military power or U.S. interests as its leaders have defined them. The U.S. policy debate on the implications of rising Chinese power for U.S. interests and for regional and global peace needs to be more sensitive to ambiguities in the evidence about Chinese foreign policy.[14]

However, the quality and quantity of revisionism in a state's policy are not static properties and Johnston notes that there are two major factors that could increase the level of revisionism in the Chinese leadership's preferences. One is domestic social unrest while the second factor would be an emerging security dilemma whereby China's revisionism on the Taiwan issue, combined with U.S. political and military responses, leads each side to see the other as fundamentally opposed to its basic security interests. The evidence for this kind of interactivity is suggestive, but worrisome. In principle, if a security dilemma is emerging at the level of discourse, we should expect to see an increase in the frequency and volume of conflictual discourses. Hardliners on both sides should be making references to each other to justify an argument that the other side is threatening basic values and interests. However, we are not witnessing such behavior at present.[15]

With regards to domestic social unrest, recently uncovered police data show that China has witnessed a sustained 10-year rise in what officials call “mass group incidents” (*quntixing shijian*), a broad, catch-all term that encompasses the full spectrum of group protests including sit-ins, strikes, group petitions, rallies, demonstrations, marches, traffic-blocking and building seizures, and even some public melees, riots, and inter-ethnic strife. The Ministry of Public Security (MPS) reports that the number of “mass incidents” (e.g. various forms of protest) had

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12 Ibid.

13 Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?”, *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4, Spring, 2003, pp. 5-56.

14 Ibid

15 Ibid.

dramatically increased from about 8,700 in 1993, to 32,000 in 1999, to about 50,000 in 2002, and surpassing 58,000 in 2003. Especially noteworthy has been the steady rate of increase: protest incidents have apparently increased every year since 1993 (although 2001 data is unavailable), and in no year did they increase by less than nine percent.[16]

This protest data tells us that a sizable portion of the Chinese population is dissatisfied with their jobs, the economy, or their local officials. However, they are not, by themselves, the best indicator of whether or not a regime is threatened by social unrest. Relatively large numbers of protests constitute far less of a threat to the government so long as most protests remain small, unorganized, peaceful, isolated from each other, and their demands remain limited and concrete.[17] From the standpoint of the CCP's survival, it is crucial to note that there is currently very little evidence that protestor demands are turning against the Chinese government *per se* (although anger at local officials seems to be virtually universal). Even more important is that 25 years after the rise of the Solidarity trade union in Poland, China has still prevented the emergence of any similar nationwide or even regional independent political party, trade union, or student, peasant, or business association that could organize or sustain major anti-regime protests.[18]

However, there is increasing consensus that the form of protests is changing in ways that Beijing will find harder to control. Police officials note that protests are growing larger in size and that "repetitive" or long-lasing protests are on the rise. Demonstrators are increasingly reaching across the old boundaries of workplace and office unit, and their levels of organization, use of communications technology, and tactical cleverness is increasing. While the police insist most protests are peaceful, they also report that "confrontativeness" and violence are on the rise.[19]

Aside from the challenges associated with maintaining internal stability, the U.S.-led War on Terror (WoT) in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks has radically altered the strategic landscape and ushered in new geopolitical alignments in Central, South, and Southeast Asia whose ramifications will be felt for a long time to come. No other major power has been as adversely affected by the geopolitical shifts caused by the U.S. counteroffensive as China, a country which has seen some of its recent foreign policy gains eroded.[20] It also has had its long term strategic goals compromised by the growing American military presence all around China's periphery and by the growing role and profile of its Asian rivals, India and Japan. Further, Beijing's much-touted model for multilateral diplomacy, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), has been sidelined in the face of Washington's

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16 Murray Scott Tanner, "Chinese Government Responses to Rising Social Unrest", Testimony presented to the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, RAND Corporation, April 14, 2005.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Mohan Malik, "Dragon on Terrorism: Assessing China's Tactical Gains and Strategic Losses Post-September 11", Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, October 2002.

post-September 11 unilateralism while China's carefully crafted image as Asia's only true great power was dealt a severe blow.[21] Beijing had hoped that Washington's need for allies in the WoT would moderate American ambitions for absolute security and reverse the unilateralist trend characteristic of the Bush administration's foreign policy, or at least cause it to abandon some of its more controversial unilateralist positions on global warming, international trade, and missile defense. However, China soon came to realize that America's short and swift military victory in Afghanistan emboldened the U.S. hawks to press ahead with these feared unilateralist tendencies.[22]

Due to the special strategic geographic importance of Central and South Asia, the U.S. will not easily give up expansion in this area. Afghanistan is the communication hub of Central Asia and for the U.S., control over Afghanistan and Central Asia could enable NATO to push forward its eastward expansion program simultaneously from east and west while helping join U.S. military forces in Europe, especially in Turkey, with those in the Asia-Pacific region. In that case, the U.S. will be able to nibble away at the strategic space of Russia to the north and threaten the security of western China to the east.[23] To the west it will be able to try to contain Iran thus providing continued support for its troops in the Middle East, and, to the south, attempt to control the two nuclear powers – India and Pakistan. Terrorist attacks on the U.S. gave it a good opportunity to expand globally while complete withdrawal from the region is unlikely and is even uncharacteristic of the U.S. as it has seldom withdrawn troops from its overseas military bases since World War II.[24] In the short term, Beijing is adhering to a policy of "wait and see" because the war against al Qaeda is not yet over and can still turn against the U.S. Many Chinese strategists believe that the pendulum will ultimately swing back in favor of China, which, unlike the U.S., is a neighbor of Central Asia by geography rather than by choice.[25]

Despite apprehensions on both sides, the U.S. and China cannot be classified as adversaries and they have a mix of common and conflicting interests which lead to broad areas for potential cooperation even though they can also lead to areas of tension and dispute.[26] Regardless, as a matter of prudence, Beijing deems it necessary to develop and modernize the PLA to address the potential threats that China faces from the U.S. However, the actual threat level is likely not as significant on the account of successful diplomacy that Beijing has engaged in over the past decade or so. China's good neighbor policy and trade diplomacy have resulted in several American allies, such as South Korea, Australia, and many Southeast Asian nations, likely being hesitant to side with the U.S. against China in a conflict over Taiwan. Some believe that this has weakened American alliances in the region and complicated American access to military facilities that could be critical to any

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ge Liede, "Will the United States Withdraw from Central and South Asia?", *Beijing Review*, January 17, 2001.

25 Malik, 2002.

26 Chambers, 2007.

American intervention in a Taiwan conflict scenario. These developments arguably mitigate a portion of the potential threat that the U.S. may pose to China but by no means do they eliminate it entirely.[27]

Dissecting Indian Strategic Thinking

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War created grave problems for India's foreign policy. New Delhi no longer enjoys the protection of the Soviet veto in the U.N. Security Council; the new Russian state no longer willingly acts as the guardian of India's interests in international forums, and Moscow is no longer able to provide soft-currency military equipment deals. This dramatic and rapid shift in the strategic realm provided unprecedented opportunities for India to reassess its international orientation and maneuver itself into a dominant regional position, beyond the narrow geopolitical confines of the old East-West division in an attempt to fully realize its economic, cultural, and military potential. With the emergence of a unipolar world, India is less idealistic, moralistic, and doctrinally bound than it was in the years of Jawaharlal Nehru's dominance in Indian foreign policy.[28]

Although the fundamental character of India's nonalignment policy has not changed, pragmatically the country's policy toward the West is more open and soft as compared to the Cold War period. New Delhi is beginning to come to terms with the new realities of a world in which "non-alignment" has lost its meaning. The main challenges for Indian diplomats and policymakers facing the post-Cold War world with its changing security environment are the need to build a strong economic base capable of sustaining the country's military growth and to maintain a higher diplomatic profile.[29] Thakur furthers these points by claiming that nonalignment distracts India from the real issues as it prepares for the 21st century: fostering regionalism in South Asia, normalizing relations with China and Pakistan, improving ties with the U.S., building relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region, rebuilding relations with the successor states of the Soviet Union, and making its economy more market-friendly. He claims that the Nonaligned Movement may straggle along for some time, but it has lost even its nuisance value and is simply irrelevant.[30]

India's rise to prominence has not simply been a consequence of the country's growing strength. The rise has also been spurred by its concurrence with a broader reordering of the global balance of power. Indeed, India has emerged as South Asia's strongest actor and acquired unprecedented opportunities for autonomous action in the region and beyond. Hilali claims that most Indian planners are confident that the time has now come for the region's smaller countries to learn to not only live with India's aspirations but also cooperate with it on a subordinate basis.[31] However, the

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[27] Ibid.

[28] A.Z. Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking and Its National Security Policy", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 5, September-October 2001, pp. 737-764.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ramesh Thakur, "India in the World: Neither Rich, Powerful, nor Principled", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 4, July - August 1997, pp. 15-22.

[31] Hilali, 2001.

cumulative effect of this stance has been to lead Pakistan to replenish and modernize its own arms and armor to the extent that it is once again able to challenge India. Further, the conditions prevailing in South Asia make the risk of a nuclear war between the emerging nuclear neighbors uncomfortably high. This risk has been fully acknowledged and there are countries in the region that seek to have extra-regional powers to resist or limit the role of India.[32]

The U.S. and China are the primary extraregional actors capable of actively challenging such an emerging hegemony. They could do so by shoring up Pakistani capabilities in the conventional and nuclear fields and have it continue to play the role of balancer against India. Some observers believe that the U.S. could counter China through an involvement with India. On the other hand, China has also been playing a role of regional balancer in South Asia by providing Pakistan with aid aimed at expanding and modernizing its land, sea, and air power capabilities. Due to this, India can presently pursue only modest goals. Instead of overestimating its capabilities, Hilali states that New Delhi should realize that the acquisition of nuclear weapons cannot guarantee it an independent role in global politics. Nuclear capability is a necessary but an insufficient condition for playing such a part. He also asserts that India will not attain such status until its economic and technological power is unchallenged and that an overly ambitious defense strategy actually runs counter to Indian interests.[33]

Structurally, the India-Pakistan relationship is toxic. It is a classic case of what Stephen Cohen calls a "paired minority conflict." In these situations both sides see themselves as vulnerable, threatened, encircled, and at risk. They have a "minority" or "small power" complex, which also means that conventional morality does not apply to them. Sri Lanka and the Middle East are the other two recent cases of a paired minority conflict and all three are self-contained, internally powered conflict machines. Cohen claims that it is easy to see why Pakistanis have a classic small power complex: they are indeed smaller than India and increasingly less capable; their friends are fickle, and when from time to time Indian politicians and officials concede that Pakistan is a legitimate country, Pakistanis feel even more insecure.[34]

But why India? There is a powerful and emerging Indian identity that transcends regional differences while also having a continental-sized economy. India has a world-class popular culture and its political parties are constantly redefining and refining a new Indian identity. However, Cohen notes that the fact remains that until very recently the self-identity of India's elite was that they were citizens of a loser state and that those who were able to do so left it for more promised lands.[35] This is changing rapidly, just as there is new thinking in Pakistan about India, but the core antagonisms still drive the overall relationship, hampering efforts to develop trade, people-to-people, and economic and institutional ties of a level that exists, for

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32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Stephen Cohen, "Rising India has a Pakistan Problem", Brookings Institute, April 9, 2009.

35 Ibid.

example, between Taiwan and China. Stephen Cohen continues on to provide an excellent explanation:

> "Indians do not know whether they want to play cricket and trade with Pakistan, or whether they want to destroy it. There is still no consensus on talking with Pakistan: sometimes the government and its spokesman claim that they do not want to deal with the generals, but when the generals are out of the limelight, they complain that the civilians are too weak to conclude a deal. The default option seems to be that Pakistan is now someone else's problem--in this case the United States. Not a few Indian generals and strategists have told me that if only America would strip Pakistan of its nuclear weapons then the Indian army could destroy the Pakistan army and the whole thing would be over."[36]

India's rapid economic growth and newfound access to military technology, especially by way of its rapprochement with the U.S., have raised hopes of a military revival in the country. Against this optimism of the rise of Indian military power stands the reality that India has not been able to alter its military-strategic position despite being one of the world's largest importers of advanced conventional weapons for three decades. Civil-military relations in India have focused too heavily on one side of the problem – how to ensure civilian control over the armed forces, while neglecting the other, and how to build and field an effective military force. This imbalance in civil-military relations has caused military modernization and reforms to suffer from a lack of political guidance, disunity of purpose and effort and material and intellectual corruption.[37]

Sixty years of rivalry with Pakistan, India has not been able to alter its strategic relationship with a country less than one-fifth its size. India's many counterinsurgencies have lasted 20 years on an average, double the worldwide average. Since the 1998 nuclear tests, reports of a growing missile gap with Pakistan have called into question the quality of India's nuclear deterrent. The high point of Indian military history – the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 – therefore, stands in sharp contrast to the persistent inability of the country to raise effective military forces.[38] No factor accounts more for the haphazard nature of Indian military modernization than the lack of political leadership on defense, stemming from the doctrine of strategic restraint. Key political leaders rejected the use of force as an instrument of politics in favor of a policy of strategic restraint that minimized the importance of the military. The Government of India held to its strong anti-militarism belief despite the reality of conflict and war that followed independence.[39]

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[36] Ibid, p. 3.

[37] Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, "The Drag on India's Military Growth", Policy Brief #176, Brookings Institute, September 2010.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

In response to the perceived inability of the Indian military to react to the December 2001 attack on the Parliament building in New Delhi by Pakistani backed Kashmiri militants and the subsequent military standoff with Pakistan, the Indian Army announced a new limited war doctrine in April 2004 that would allow it to mobilize quickly and undertake retaliatory attacks in response to specific challenges posed by Pakistan's "proxy war" in Kashmir.[40] This Cold Start doctrine marked a break from the fundamentally defensive orientation that the Indian military has employed since independence in 1947. Requiring combined arms operating jointly with airpower from the Indian Air Force, Cold Start represents a significant undertaking for the Indian military. Walter Ladwig III has carried out a landmark study on the Cold Start concept, including its potential impact on strategic stability in South Asia, and assesses the Indian military's progress toward implementing the new doctrine since its unveiling.[41]

Limited war on the subcontinent poses a serious risk of escalation based on a number of factors that are not necessarily under the control of policymakers or military leaders who would initiate the conflict. A history of misperception, poor intelligence, and India's awkward national security decision-making system suggests that Cold Start could be a risky undertaking that may increase instability in South Asia.[42] An assessment of recent war games as well as organizational developments within India's military suggests that Cold Start is still in the experimental phase with significant organizational and resource barriers to its full implementation. Nevertheless, India's progress toward developing an operational Cold Start capability should be monitored. As the Indian Army enhances its ability to achieve a quick decision against Pakistan, political leaders in New Delhi may be more inclined to employ force in a future conflict with potentially catastrophic results. Relative conventional parity has been a cornerstone of the ugly stability that exists on the subcontinent. Not only does enhanced war-fighting ability threaten that stability, but as the Indian Army progresses toward a Cold Start capability, the political pressure to employ such a strategy in a time of crisis only increases.[43]

Easily the most important of the enduring Sino-Indian disputes is the Chinese claim over nearly 90,000 square kilometers of "Indian" territory, including parts of Arunachal Pradesh. Low-key insurrectionary activities across the porous boundary occasionally have flared into skirmishes and exchanges of small arms fire.[44] The Chinese doctrinal position envisages no-first use (NFU) and non-use against non-nuclear powers. After the Shakti-II series of tests, India was no longer a non-nuclear weapons state. Further, according to India's interpretation of the Chinese nuclear doctrine, China's NFU declaration does not prevent its use on its own territory or, in

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40 Walter Ladwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine", *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Winter 2007/2008.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Anupam Srivastava, "India's Growing Missile Ambitions: Assessing the Technical and Strategic Dimensions", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 2, March-April 2000, pp. 311-341.

the Sino-Indian context, the disputed territory with India. As such, many Indian strategists conclude that China could launch a pre-emptive strike using tactical nuclear weapons against Indian counter-force targets in the disputed region. This is, of course, in addition to the unlikely scenario under which China would launch a massive nuclear first strike against strategic targets in India. Srivastava notes that China can activate both of these options, either as a first response or in the event of serious escalation of conflict involving conventional forces.[45]

Sino-Indian Relations: Heading Towards a Collision?

Frazier provides a variety of reasons why the outlook for Sino-Indian relations is not necessarily positive:

- Large populations next to each other
- Both China and India have rapidly growing economies
- Both have expanding military capabilities
- There exist unresolved border disputes from a war that occurred over 40 years ago
- Underperformance when it comes to the amount of trade between the two countries
- Fundamentally different forms of government and cultural traditions
- China's delivery of nuclear and conventional weaponry to India's long-standing rival, Pakistan
- India has conducted nuclear and missile tests citing China as its primary motivation[46]

Indian strategic affairs expert Raja Mohan describes Sino-Indian relations as "between resentment and rapprochement" and asserts that handling Beijing is India's single greatest foreign policy challenge. Mohan also notes that although India and China entered the modern world around the same time, China ranks ahead of India in almost all indicators of national power and that a restoration of balance is an absolute necessity for Indian interests. In addition, India views the subcontinent as its "natural security zone" whereas China feels that it cannot allow India to exercise unrestrained

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Mark Frazier, "Quiet Competition and the Future of Sino-Indian Relations", in *The India-China Relationship - Rivalry and Engagement*, ed. Francine Frankel and Harry Harding, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 294-321.

dominance on its southern borders.[47] As such, India's regional strategy regarding China likely focuses on:

- Upgrading military power to maintain a balance

- Bilateralism – leads to uncertainty among India's neighbors and can avoid internationalizing South Asian issues

- Contain or eliminate Chinese influence, especially in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka

- Counter destabilization in South Asia by preserving the stability of neighboring states with the exclusion of internal and external forces that run counter to India's interests

- Regional cooperation minus China – one major example being the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, which China is vying for membership[48]

Conversely, Pravin Sawhney has identified four major elements of Chinese policy towards India since the end of the Cold War period:

- Diffuse the core border issue

- Permit no political or diplomatic concessions

- Ensure through a strategic partnership with Pakistan that India remains a sub- regional power

- Utilize the current relatively peaceful regional environment to build national power, including military power. In the words of Sun Tzu, "to defeat the enemy without a battle."[49]

In general, Indian strategists pay much more attention to China than vice versa. Chinese strategists have traditionally dedicated more time and resources towards analyzing the U.S. and Japan. However, as India moves further into a defense-based relationship with the U.S., we are now beginning to witness a shift. Some strategic thinkers feel that China poses a real and immediate threat to India, citing China's history of exporting Communist ideology, armed conflicts with its neighbors, its perceived tendency to escalate tensions in the region, the PLA's recent military modernization program, and China's desire to capitalize on economic gain to

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[47] Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon – The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, p. 155.

[48] Harish Kapur, *Diplomacy of India – Then and Now*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2002, p. 196.

[49] Pravin Sawhney, *The Defence Makeover -10 Myths that Shape India's Image*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001, p.66.

expand its influence throughout Asia.[50] In addition to an immediate threat, many Indians view China as a long-term threat as they believe that as China becomes more powerful, it will become more assertive and may become unwilling to tolerate a major power with global reach in its neighborhood. China could very well reacquire the "Middle Kingdom Complex" and become "smug" about their superiority over India.[51]

It has also been noted that Sino-Indian relations may run into trouble in the long term because India and China have very different and mutually antagonistic self images in addition to radically different political systems. As both of these systems continue to develop in opposite directions, it will create problems in an already-troubled relationship.[52] However, nothing provides a clearer glimpse into Indian apprehensions over China than former Prime Minister Vajpayee's letter to President Clinton following India's 1998 nuclear test:

> "I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, especially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapons state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust that country has materially helped another neighbor of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state. At the hands of this bitter neighbor we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years."[53]

Although many in India believe that China seeks a peaceful regional security environment, it has been alleged that China has a time frame within which it will seek to prevent anything from interfering with its own economic development. However, it is unclear if this will continue in the long term. There is also concern within the Indian strategic community that China could threaten or initiate border hostilities not necessarily to gain territory, but to demonstrate power in the face of opposition in Tibet, Taiwan, or other parts of China or to attempt to force India to behave as a "strategic subordinate."[54] On the Sino-Indian border, there are many areas where Chinese and Indians are in close and potentially confrontational positions and when dealing with the border issue, Kamath advocates the "once beaten twice careful

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[50] Sujit Bhattacharya, "India and China: New Directions", in *Indian Foreign Policy - Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. New Delhi Foreign Service Institute, 2007.

[51] Steven Hoffman, "Perception and China Policy in India", in *The India-China Relationship - Rivalry and Engagement*, ed. Francine Frankel and Harry Harding, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 33-75, p. 43.

[52] Sumit Ganguly, "India and China: Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security", in *The India-China Relationship - Rivalry and Engagement*, ed. Francine Frankel and Harry Harding, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 103-134.

[53] "Nuclear Anxiety; Indian's Letter to Clinton on the Nuclear Testing", *New York Times*, May 13, 1998.

[54] Hoffman, 2004, p. 43.

approach."[55] However, as long as a large portion of Indian troops stay pinned down in counter-insurgency and other internal security operations in Jammu and Kashmir, India will not have the manpower nor the funding to face up to the PLA in the event of a hostilities over disputed territory. If the current situation continues to prevail, India's chance of achieving a victory in an armed conflict against China is slim, thus making a repeat of the 1962 conflict a very real possibility.

This strategic reality is likely why India has expressed strong interest in cooperating in a joint ballistic missile defense system with the U.S. India is very concerned about the seemingly perennial instability in the northeast, a concern which stems from not only the current balance of forces which significantly favors China, but also the myriad of insurgencies and the questionable loyalties of some of the local populations to the Indian state. In regards to the latter, a National Investigation Probe in October 2010 alleged that Beijing is using various anti-India militant groups in the region to obtain information on Indian Army deployments in Arunachal Pradesh, including information pertaining to India's signature Agni-III long-range missile.[56] While these allegations are yet to be independently confirmed, it highlights the extent of India's concerns regarding China's overall strategic posture in the region. As such, it can be reasonably argued that India views a tested and reliable missile defense system as a strategic equalizer that can be justified on the grounds that not only China, but other regional states, such as Myanmar, are also bolstering their medium and long-range missile capacities. In this respect, Myanmar (which many erroneously refer to as a Chinese vassal state) has actually undermined core Chinese national interests by unilaterally pursuing this missile program.[57]

Border Disputes

Non-democratic states are more likely than democracies to be the first to resort to violent force when involved in a militarized interstate dispute (MID). Minor powers are also more likely to use violent force first, compared with major powers. Measures of association also indicate that while states that use violent force first in a MID are much more likely to be revisionist states, they are unlikely to achieve victory in the dispute as a result.[58] Further, John Vasquez and Marie Henehan have found that territorial disputes were more war prone than disputes over other types of issues and

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55 P.M. Kamath, "India-China Relations since the End of the Cold War: India's Security Concern and Policy Options", in *India, China, and Southeast Asia - Dynamics of Development*, ed. MD David and TR Ghoble, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p. 133.

56 Nishit Dholabahi, "Northwest rebels 'spy' for China", The Telegraph (Calcutta), October 26, 2010.

57 For more information, see Ryan Clarke, "Vassal States Do Not Undermine Core National Interests: Rethinking China's Relationships with North Korea and Myanmar", *RUSI Journal*, February/March 2011

58 Mary Caprioli and Peter Trumbore, "First Use of Violent Force in Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1980-2001", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 43, No. 6, November 2006, pp. 741-749.

Paul Hensel documented the increased likelihood with which these particular disputes escalated and resulted in a larger number of fatalities.[59]

By statistically analyzing the effects of time on the likelihood of dispute resolution, Hassner and Hironaka showed that interstate territorial disputes underwent entrenchment. Entrenchment is the process by which disputes become increasingly resistant to resolution over time, marked by an enhanced reluctance to offer, accept, or implement compromises or even negotiate over territory. This entrenchment is often accompanied by an escalation of hostile rhetoric regarding the territory and even armed clashes. Of the 160 disputes in their 2002 data set, nearly 50 percent were resolved within 20 years of onset, but only another six percent were resolved in the 20 years after that, and only another five percent ended within 75 years of initiation.[60]

Hassner notes that three processes that occur over time inexorably drive the entrenchment of territorial disputes: as these conflicts mature, the perceived cohesion of the disputed territory rises; its boundaries are perceived as becoming more clearly defined; and the availability of substitutes for the territory appears to decline. This threefold shift in perceptions does not always thwart the resolution of prolonged territorial disputes, but it does generate ever-growing obstacles that must be overcome by those seeking to resolve such conflicts. Rather than explain when or why states seek to resolve their territorial disputes, Hassner highlights the increased difficulties that leaders face when they seek resolution to these disputes later rather than sooner.[61]

Since the end of the Cold War, China has successfully settled several of its border disputes with its neighbors, including Russia, Kazakhstan, and Vietnam (land and coastal maritime borders although the agreement on the latter is being implemented slowly). However, other border disputes remain unsolved, one of which is with India and dates back to the 1950s and disagreements over the legitimacy of the McMahon Line. By 1959, tensions along the border escalated into armed combat and in 1962 China and India fought a brief border war in which Chinese forces soundly defeated their Indian opponents before ceasing operations. There have been numerous discussions regarding the border dispute over the years and in 2003 Beijing and New Delhi agreed to negotiate a political framework for resolving the dispute and in 2005 an agreement was reached on a set of principles intended to guide further negotiations on the framework during Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit. However, little real progress has been made and on the eve of President Hu Jintao's November 2006 visit to India, China's ambassador to India claimed that Arunachal Pradesh was Chinese territory.[62] Also complicating matters are Indian complaints regarding repeated PLA incursions into what India views as its territory in this region, namely Tawang.

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[59] John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
Originally cited in Ron Hassner, "The Path to Intractability – Time and the Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes", *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Winter 2006/2007, pp. 107-138.

[60] Ron Hassner and Ann Hironaka, "Can Time Heal All Wounds?" paper presented at the annual convention of the International Studies Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 24–27, 2002.

[61] Hassner, 2006/2007.

[62] Chambers, 2007.

Regime insecurity best explains China's many attempts to compromise in its territorial disputes. Most of China's disputes are located on its long land border adjacent to frontier regions where the authority of the regime has been weak. Ethnic minorities dominate these frontiers, which make up more than half of the country and were weakly governed before 1949. During periods of regime insecurity, especially in the event of ethnic unrest near its international boundaries, China's leaders have been much more willing to offer concessions in exchange for cooperation that strengthens their control of these areas, such as denying external support to separatists or affirming recognition of Chinese sovereignty over these regions.[63]

Regime insecurity also best explains China's pattern of cooperation and delay in its territorial disputes. China's leaders have compromised when faced with internal threats to regime security—the revolt in Tibet, the instability following the Great Leap Forward, the legitimacy crisis after the Tiananmen upheaval, and separatist violence in Xinjiang. The timing of compromise efforts, official documents, and statements by China's leaders demonstrate that internal threats, not external ones, account for why and when China pursued cooperation.[64]

Since 1949, China's use of force in its territorial disputes has varied widely. China has participated in 23 territorial conflicts with other states but has used force in only six. Some of these disputes, especially those with India and Vietnam, were notably violent while others, such as China's dispute with the Soviet Union, risked nuclear war. Although China has been willing to use force in some of its conflicts, it has seized little land that it did not control before the outbreak of combat. Moreover, China has compromised more frequently than it has used force, offering concessions in 17 of its territorial disputes.[65]

China has been less belligerent than leading theories of international relations might have predicted for a state with its characteristics. For American advocates of offensive realism, China has rarely exploited its military superiority to either bargain hard for the territory that it claims or seize it through force. China has likewise not become increasingly aggressive in managing its territorial disputes as its relative military and economic power has grown since 1990. For scholars studying the effects of nationalism, China has been willing to offer territorial concessions despite historical legacies of external victimization and territorial dismemberment that suggest instead assertiveness in conflicts over sovereignty. For those focused on the role of domestic political institutions, China has escalated only a few of its territorial conflicts despite a highly centralized, authoritarian political system with limited internal constraints on the use of force.[66]

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63 M. Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation – Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes", *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2005, pp. 46-83.

64 Ibid.

65 M. Taylor Fravel, "Power Shifts and Escalation – Explaining China's Use of Force in Territorial Disputes", *International Security*, Vol. 32, No.3, Winter 2007/2008, pp. 44-83.

66 Ibid.

Border issues such as the dispute over Arunachal Pradesh stem largely from different fundamental approaches by China and India. India has taken a more legalist approach, insisting on maintaining the boundaries that were drawn by the British. Conversely, China tends to pursue negotiations from a more realist perspective based upon hard power. Further, pre-1949 (the year of the founding of the People's Republic of China) borders are regarded by China as having been drawn without China's approval and are viewed as reminders of the repeated humiliation that China suffered at the hands of the European powers and Japan.[67] As such, do not expect much flexibility from Beijing on these issues.

Regarding the issue of Arunachal Pradesh, then-Foreign Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee in 2006 claimed that the territory is "an integral part of India" while the former Chinese Ambassador to New Delhi, Sun Yuxi, stated that the entire Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory.[68] These are clearly antagonistic claims and whatever the case, both the Chinese and Indians are investing large sums of money in infrastructure projects on territory that is claimed by the other, thus raising the stakes of a future conflict. Further, some Indian scholars feel that China is waiting until its comprehensive national power is considerably stronger than the opposite party before it begins to resolve its border disputes and that although the middle sector of the Sino-Indian border is largely resolved, there is concern over "adventurous" Chinese missile deployments.[69] Others feel that China's hardened stance on Arunachal Pradesh is a result of India's expanding ties with the U.S.[70] Also, there has been an increase in Chinese patrolling of Chumar while Frazier believes that either Beijing or New Delhi could possibly pursue its territorial claims in the future in order to re-energize public support.[71]

In November 2010, India formed two new army divisions—comprising more than 36,000 men—to defend the north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, a remote state which adjoins China and is also claimed by Beijing. Indian army chief, General VK Singh said they were necessary to beef up defenses against China. He also said their formation was India's response to the "huge Chinese build-up" in Tibet over the last three to four years and to China's "superb" communications on its side of the border, especially after a new train line to Lhasa was built in 2006. India also claimed that the Chinese airlift capability is far superior. Bhaumik notes that the formation of the two new divisions means that India's deployments in the eastern sector of its border with China now match the five army divisions that existed in 1986-87, when the two countries nearly went to war.[72]

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67 Sujit Dutta, "Sino-Indian Diplomatic Negotiations: A Preliminary Assessment", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. XXII, No. 12, March 1999.

68 "Arunachal Pradesh is ours, not China's: Pranab", Rediff, November 14, 2006, p. 1.

69 Jabin Jacob and Atom Sunil Singh, "India-China Border Issue Report of IPCS Seminar held on Dec. 8, 2006", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Article no. 2169, 2006, p.1.

70 Jo Johnson and Richard McGregor, "China Raises Tension in India Dispute", *Financial Times*, June 10, 2007.

71 Jacob and Singh, 2006; Frazier, 2004.

72 Subir Bhaumik, "India to Deploy 36,000 Extra Troops on Chinese Border", BBC, November 23, 2010.

Given the presence of the PLA on the other side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Indian leaders hypothesized that it was strategically prudent to maintain a weak roadway infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh. The reasoning behind this decision was that the difficult terrain would deter the Chinese from furthering their strategy of gaining access to up to 90,000 square kilometers of disputed territory.[73] Another motivation was the possibility that the Chinese would use the Indian-built roads in the event of a war.[74] However, this policy was abandoned in May 2006 and India began to construct roads on its side of the LAC. The road construction project in the territory is part of a larger plan to install a system of roads in the Indian states along the LAC. This shift in policy is partially attributable to the Chinese decision to construct roads in Aksai Chin in the western sector. Further, China's road link to Tibet runs along the border of Arunachal Pradesh, thus allowing the Chinese to transport goods, services, and military equipment to the disputed border regions.[75]

India's decision to implement road projects in border areas does not merely represent a response to a Chinese action, but also demonstrates the growing confidence of the Indian leadership. Increased political, economic, and military might seem to have led New Delhi to abandon its more apprehensive approach towards China that was adopted following India's traumatic loss in 1962.[76] This increased assertiveness on the part of India may be regarded as positive by some, but could also validate Chinese suspicions that India is intending to challenge China for Asian leadership in the future despite its limited comprehensive national power. Also likely fueling Chinese suspicions is the stationing of Indian troops along the LAC combined with the deployment of the Agni-II medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) in Assam that are capable of striking many major Chinese cities.[77]

A common Chinese argument over Beijing's claim to Aksai Chin is that the territory was once a part of Tibet.[78] Aksai Chin was seized from India by China during the 1962 border war with 38,000 square kilometers being acquired from India directly while another 5,180 square kilometers of northern Kashmir were ceded to Beijing by Pakistan as part of a 1963 pact.[79] After the war, Indian Parliament passed a resolution stating that every inch of land that was lost in 1962 would be recovered

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[73] Namrata Goswami, "Building Strategic Roadways in Arunachal Pradesh", Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, June 13, 2006

[74] Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy, "New Roads in Arunachal: Politics of Routes in India", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Article no. 2018, 2006.

[75] Goswami, 2006.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Jing-dong Yuan, "India's Rise After Pokhran II: Chinese Analyses and Assessments", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 6, November-December 2001, pp. 978-1001.

[78] Dawa Norbu, *China's Tibet Policy*, Curzon Press, Surrey, 2001.

[79] Nick Easen, "Aksai Chin: China's disputed Slice of Kashmir", CNN, May 24, 2002.

and India still makes it clear that it expects Aksai Chin to be returned.[80] However, China claims that there are no possibilities of China withdrawing from Aksai Chin on the grounds that the territory has been part of China since ancient times and is currently under effective administration.[81]

In an attempt to solidify this claim, over the past 40 years China has been very busy in Aksai Chin and has built an all-weather highway that links western Tibet with southern Xinjiang.[82] This highway has substantial significance for China as it leads to the old Silk Route, its nuclear testing site at Lop Nor, and the oil and natural gas resources in the Taklimikan Desert in Xinjiang. The highway is also a key logistics route for the PLA's four combat units deployed in Tibet and Xinjiang. In addition, joint Sino-Pak construction of the Karakoram Highway links Tibet and Xinjiang to Gilgit in Pakistan-Held Kashmir.[83]

China Challenges Indian Naval Dominance

Like all of the great surges of trade in history, the explosion of Indian Ocean commerce is based on mutual needs. China and India need energy supplies from the Persian Gulf states and oil and raw materials from Africa, and Africa needs the financial resources that the Gulf states are accumulating in unprecedented quantities. Now that India has become a net food importer once again, China, India, and the Middle East all have an interest in developing African agriculture as perhaps the last great untapped food resource of a world whose population looks set to grow from today's 6.5 billion to 9.1 billion by 2050.[84]

The rivalry for resources is intense. Walker claims that the Indian Ocean is also witnessing the beginnings of an arms race, with China building ports that can also serve as naval bases at Gwadar, Pakistan, which is near the mouth of the Persian Gulf, and at Sittwe in Myanmar, on the Bay of Bengal. Alarmed by China's ambitions, India has been boosting its own forces with a new fleet of French-built Scorpene stealth submarines, a program to build three aircraft carriers, and development of the Agni-3 missile, which could, in theory, carry a nuclear warhead to Shanghai.[85]

Pointing China seawards is the dramatic boom in its economy, which has led to an explosion of trade, and thus to the concomitant explosion of commerce along the country's coast. Despite the jet and information age, 90 percent of global commerce and two-thirds of all petroleum supplies still travel by sea. In 2007, Shanghai's ports

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[80] Ibid.
Jacob and Singh, 2006.

[81] Jyoti Malholtra, "Aksai Chin is Ours, says China", Express India, July 18, 1998.

[82] Easen, 2002.

[83] Chandra Khanduri, "Leading Towards Sino-Indian Détente", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Article no. 447, 2000.

[84] Martin Walker, "Indian Ocean Nexus", *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2, Spring, 2008, pp. 21-28.

[85] Ibid.

overtook Hong Kong's as the largest in the world according to cargo handled while China is predicted to become the world's most prolific shipbuilder, overtaking Japan and South Korea. Sea power is partially determined by merchant shipping and Kaplan believes that China will lead the world in this field.[86]

Kaplan also believes that the Chinese Navy would prefer to be not a one-ocean, but a two-ocean power, with multiple access routes between the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific to ease its dependence on the Straits of Malacca. At the Bangladeshi port of Chittagong on the Bay of Bengal, the Chinese are building a container port facility and seeking extensive naval and commercial access.[87] In Myanmar, where Beijing has given billions of dollars in military assistance to the ruling junta, China is believed by some to be building and upgrading commercial and naval bases, as well as constructing roads, waterways, and pipeline links from the Bay of Bengal to China's Yunnan Province, even as it operates surveillance facilities on islands deep in the Bay of Bengal. Kaplan notes that a number of these ports are closer to cities in central and western China than those cities are to Beijing and Shanghai. Such Indian Ocean ports, with north-south road and rail links, will help economically liberate landlocked inner China. It is significant that 90 percent of Chinese arms sales are to Indian Ocean littoral countries, which also virtually surround India on three sides. Kaplan takes his point one step further:

> "The Indian Ocean, in the years and decades hence, will help register whether China becomes a great military power or remains as it is, a great regional power in the Pacific."[88]

The Indian Ocean is home to many choke points, such as the Straits of Hormuz, Straits of Malacca, Lombok and the Sunda Straits. Any disruption in traffic flow through these points can have disastrous consequences. The disruption of energy flows in particular is a considerable security concern for littoral states, as the majority of their energy lifelines are sea-based. Since energy is critical to influencing the geo-political strategies of a nation, any turbulence in its supply has serious security consequences. Given the spiraling demand for energy from India, China and Japan, Ghosh claims that it is inevitable that these countries are sensitive to the security of the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and choke points of the region.[89]

The Indian Navy conducts regular naval exercises with the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) and Southeast Asian navies and in 2004 held its second joint exercise with the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). India has been spearheading a multilateral naval exercise, designated MILAN, since the mid 1990s. MILAN involves a series of exercises, includes participation from the Bay of Bengal rim states,

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86 Robert Kaplan, "China's Two-Ocean Strategy", in *China's Arrival: A Strategic Framework for a Global Partnership*, Center for a New American Security (CNAS), September 2009.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid, p. 54.

89 P.K. Ghosh, "Maritime Security Challenges in South Asia and the Indian Ocean: Response Strategies", Paper Prepared for the Center for Strategic and International Studies – American-Pacific Sealanes Security Institute conference on Maritime Security in Asia. January 18-20, 2004, Honolulu, Hawaii.

and is conducted every year off the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.[90] The MILAN series was institutionalized with the objective of achieving interoperability with ASEAN navies, allaying fears about the Indian Navy's growing influence in the Andaman Sea, and promoting goodwill between India and ASEAN countries. Ghosh believes that MILAN 2003, held in February, further highlighted India's commitment to this end. The exercise now includes navies from Myanmar, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Australia.[91]

For Chinese maritime soft power, such as public diplomacy and the forwarding of a Zheng He-like peaceful image, to pay dividends in the Indian Ocean basin, it would need the acquiescence of India. However, many vocal members of New Delhi's strategic community do not view the Chinese naval entry into its backyard with equanimity.[92] Leaders of the foreign policy and defense establishments express deep ambivalence about China's anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden, many of whom depict the operation as China's first step onto a slippery slope toward a permanent Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Toshi claims that it is no accident that the 2009 annual Malabar exercise took place not off India's Malabar coast, but off the coasts of Japan, bringing together the Indian, American and Japanese fleets.[93]

The Indian navy is growing in potency, reach and stated ambition. A 2007 doctrine declared an overriding goal of safeguarding energy imports vital for India's development. This implies, at a minimum, of India playing a greater role in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, in pursuing such self interest, India says it offers a service to all trading nations by protecting the sea lanes from the Straits of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca.[94]

Indian strategists have long regarded an Indian Ocean sphere of influence and constabulary responsibility as a natural inheritance from the Raj though only now is New Delhi building the requisite partnerships and capabilities. India is developing a modernized fleet of about 150 ships, to be centered on at least two aircraft carriers; the navy's share of the defense budget is gradually rising, though at 15 percent it is still inordinately low.[95] Its purchase of the amphibious transport dock USS Trenton (renamed INS Jalashwa) has increased its ability to move troops by sea and the landing platform dock (LPD) on the ship increases India's ability to conduct amphibious operations far from its shores. India now plans to acquire a second ship in the same class as the U.S. and the ability of the Indian Navy to project its power has begun to acquire a new edge. In the same month of the INS Jalashwa acquisition, then-Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee was in Indonesia to reaffirm New Delhi's

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90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 Toshi Yoshihara, "China's "Soft" Naval Power in the Indian Ocean", *Pacific Focus*, Vol. XXV, No. 1, April 2010, pp. 59-88.

93 Ibid.

94 Rory Medcalf, "India Ahoy", *Wall Street Journal*, April 29, 2010.

95 Ibid.

strong commitment to an expansion of security cooperation with Jakarta. The Indonesian Parliament has already approved a bilateral defense cooperation agreement that envisages arms acquisitions from India as well as joint production of weapons.[96] New generation destroyers, frigates and submarines are entering service. P8 Poseidon surveillance and submarine hunting planes bought from the U.S. will lead to a picture of ocean traffic which India could share in real time with Washington and its allies. Further, there is progress, albeit unsteady, toward the submarine-launched nuclear deterrent India seeks against China.[97]

In early February 2010, the Indian Navy hosted the seventh biennial Milan-2010 exercises in the seas around the Bay of Bengal's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where eight Asia-Pacific navies (Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand, along with observers from Brunei, Philippines, Vietnam and New Zealand) had gathered. The agenda at this naval congregation included discussions on maritime terrorism, piracy, and a seminar on humanitarian aid and disaster relief. Thereafter, the participating navies conducted joint naval exercises focused on sea lane security.[98]

The Indian Navy chief has stated that MILAN 2010 does not indicate the creation of a "security bloc" targeted against any other nation, an apparent reference to China, which is very sensitive to multinational naval exercises held by other Asian-Pacific states. Three of the navies observing or participating in MILAN 2010 (Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines) belong to nations engaged in territorial disputes with China over the resource-rich Spratly Islands of the South China Sea.[99] India has had different responses to multilateral naval and maritime initiatives such as the U.S.-proposed Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI - aimed at intercepting weapons of mass destruction being transported by sea) or the "Thousand Ship Navy" concept (TSN - a global maritime partnership designed to protect sea lanes), and the U.N.- sanctioned International Ship and Port Security Code (ISPS – designed to secure sea ports) and Container Security Initiative (CSI – a mechanism for the monitoring and surveillance of regulatory and safety mechanisms of container cargo). In essence, India supports multilateral initiatives that have been sanctioned by the United Nations and remains averse to any U.S.-proposed initiatives, such as the PSI and TSN.[100]

Holmes and Toshi argue that an increasingly sea-power-minded China will neither shelter passively in coastal waters, nor throw itself into competition with the U.S. in the Pacific Ocean. Rather, Beijing will direct its energies toward South and Southeast Asia, where supplies of oil, natural gas, and other commodities critical to China's economic development must pass. There China will encounter an equally sea-

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96 Raja Mohan, "East Asian Security: India's Rising Profile", S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, July 30, 2007.

97 Medcalf, 2007.

98 Vijay Sakhuja, "The Indian Navy's Agenda for Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean", *TerrorismMonitor*, Vol. VIII, Iss. 8, February 26, 2010.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

power-minded India that enjoys marked geostrategic advantages. Beijing will likely content itself with soft power diplomacy in these regions until it can settle the dispute with Taiwan, freeing up resources for maritime endeavors farther from China's coasts.[101]

Despite the overall accuracy of the assessment made by Holmes and Toshi, elsewhere in South Asia, China is currently developing the Hambantota port project on Sri Lanka's southern coast. The Hambantota Development Zone, which the Chinese will also help build, is set to include a container port, a bunkering system, an oil refinery, an airport, and other facilities. It is expected to cost about US$1 billion and the China's Exim is financing more than 85 percent of the project. China's role in the Hambantota project has caused some concern in India with some analysts even suggesting that the Indians have lost out to the Chinese.[102] However, geographic proximity, ethnic links, and close ties between India and Sri Lanka cannot likely be eroded by a few projects and agreements with other countries. Nonetheless, a Chinese presence so close to India's shores has implications for Indian security. With Hambantota, the soft Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean has been further consolidated. The Hambantota port project is the latest in a series of steps that China has taken in recent years to secure its access to the Indian Ocean and to secure sea lanes through which its energy supplies are transported. Some analysts have interpreted these recent Chinese actions as proof that Beijing has indeed adopted a "string of pearls" strategy.[103]

One such "pearl" is Gwadar, Pakistan and since late 2001 China has been engaged in constructing a deep sea port and a special economic zone at Gwadar in Balochistan province just 72 kilometers from the Iranian border and 400 kilometers east of the Strait of Hormuz. China's massive involvement in the Gwadar project – it has provided most of its funding and technical expertise – has provided Beijing with a listening post from where it can monitor U.S. naval activity in the Persian Gulf, Indian activity in the Arabian Sea, and any future American-Indian cooperation in the Indian Ocean. Other pearls that China has been developing are naval facilities in Bangladesh, where it is developing a container port facility at Chittagong. China is also building radar, refit, and refuel facilities at bases in Sittwe, Coco, Hianggyi, Khaukphyu, Mergui, and Zadetkyi Kyun in Burma in addition to sites in Thailand and Cambodia.[104] One Indian analyst elaborates:

> Borders apart, China's growing presence in the oceanic waters aims at treating India as a secondary player and consolidating China's

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101 James Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "China's Naval Ambitions in the Indian Ocean", *Strategic Studies*, Vol. 31, Iss. 3, June 2008, pp. 367-394.

102 Sudha Ramachandran, "China Moves into India's Backyard", *Asia Times*, March 13, 2007.

103 Ibid.
For a more in-depth discussion, see Christopher Pehrson, "String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenge of China's Rising Power Across the Asian Littoral", Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, July 2006.

104 Ibid.

> dominance in the Asia-Pacific and poses discreet competition for power and influence between the rising great powers in the region.[105]

India is unlikely to sit quietly while these developments take place and even though the Indian military lags behind the PLA as a whole, the Indian Navy outclasses the PLAN. In this case, while also focusing on the use of submarines and other undersea "unknowns", China will likely seek to leverage the border dispute and the PLA's superior ground forces in the event that Delhi becomes overtly hostile over China's naval activity. India is ill-equipped to face another Chinese onslaught on the border and while China's major force concentration is on the eastern seaboard facing Japan and Taiwan, its capability to mobilize troops on the LAC is far more effective than an India that has only recently realized the importance of developing infrastructure along the border.[106]

However, views within New Delhi are not completely unanimous. Indian strategist Iskander Rehman claims that China's so-called string of pearls strategy, the degree of advancement of which he believes has frequently been overstated, is not likely to immediately put Indian maritime security in jeopardy. Nevertheless, there will inevitably come a time when India will have to face the reality of a Chinese naval presence in its own backyard. Rehman states that Beijing cannot afford for its Achilles heel, i.e. its acute vulnerability to any interruption of its overseas trade, to be bared for much longer.[107] He even goes one step further:

> "Only when India's strategic community grasps that India is already squarely poised over China's energy jugular, will they be able to break with an acutely ingrained sense of vulnerability. Not only would the presence of Chinese vessels present no real existential threat to Indian naval dominance in the region, it would also, paradoxically, provide the Indian Navy with a far greater degree of tactical flexibility in the event of a future conflict with China, be it on land or at sea. This advantage can only be guaranteed, however, if India undertakes certain preparatory measures designed to effectively lock down its control of its maritime surroundings, and curb Chinese influence among certain key oceanic 'swing' states."[108]

China-Pakistan Ties: The Most Consistent Relationship in South Asia

Several Chinese scholars have stated that India is using the WoT as a pretext to militarily subdue Pakistan, the only nation that they believe can prevent Indian hegemony in South Asia. Possibly in response to this concern, an arms agreement was signed during General Musharaf's visit to China in December 2001 to construct, amongst other heavy weapons, an all-solid-fuel Shaheen III missile with a range of

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105 Bhartendu Kumar Singh, "Military Diplomacy: The Future of Sino-Indian Military Relations?", *China Brief*, Vol. 8, Iss. 23, December 8, 2008, p.2.

106 Ibid.

107 Iskander Rehman, "China's String of Pearls and India's Tactical Advantage", Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, June 8, 2010.

108 Ibid, p. 3.

3,500 to 4,000 kilometers that would allow Pakistan to target all major Indian cities. Further, Chinese leaders had repeatedly informed Musharaf that although China hoped that Pakistan would refrain from violence, in the event of a war between India and Pakistan, Beijing would stand behind Islamabad. PLA officials such as General Xiong Guangkai refer to Pakistan as "China's Israel."[109]

Tellis believes that China has a deceptive and indirect strategy of boxing in India though the development of proxies and utilizing all the benefits of bilateral relations while at the same time implementing their larger-scale containment policy.[110] China has also historically tried to block Indian efforts to obtain a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.[111] Further, Tellis claims that China has supported rebel groups in India's northeastern regions in the past and there is considerable anxiety in New Delhi that Beijing may readopt this tactic in the event of hostilities.[112]

Despite many viewing China's cultivation of friendships with India's near neighbors in a hostile lens, there are others who view these ties in more economic terms. For example, some of Beijing's motivations for developing close relations with the nations of South Asia are to gain access to raw materials, commodities, natural resources, and to new markets for Chinese goods.[113] Whatever view one takes, Chinese influence in South Asia is clearly increasing and serves as an irritant and area of suspicion in Sino-Indian ties.

The thorn in the side of the Sino-Indian relationship is Beijing's relations with Islamabad. Since the 1962 border war, China has "aligned itself with Pakistan and made heavy strategic and economic investments in that country to keep the common enemy, India, under strategic pressure" and to "exploit the India-Pakistan situation to bring advantages to Beijing."[114] Chinese attempts to improve relations with India tend to be paralleled by efforts to improve Pakistani conventional and nuclear capabilities. For example, during Chinese rapprochement efforts in the 1980s and 1990s, China still provided nuclear and missile protection to Pakistan, likely emboldening Islamabad to wage a proxy war in Kashmir without much fear of Indian

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109 Mohan Malik, "The China Factor in the India-Pakistan Conflict", *Parameters*, Spring 2003, pp. 35-50, p. 5.

110 Ashley Tellis, "China and India in Asia", in *The India-China Relationship - Rivalry and Engagement*, ed. Francine Frankel and Harry Harding, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 134-178.

111 Mona Lisa Tucker, "China and India - Friends or Foes?", *Air and Space Power Journal*, Fall 2003

112 Tellis, 2004.

113 Jing-dong, 2001.

114 Malik, 2003, p. 1.

retaliation.[115] Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1951, China and Pakistan have never publicly disagreed on any bilateral, regional, or global issue and in April 2005 Beijing and Islamabad signed the "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Good Neighborly Relations" that binds both nations to not join any alliance or bloc that would potentially harm the sovereignty or strategic interests of the other.[116] In addition, China and Pakistan have frequent high-level exchanges and have engaged in joint military exercises with the most recent being the July 2010 counter-terrorism exercises in Ningxia.

China's Kashmir Policy

While China remained neutral during the 1999 Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan, Sino-Pakistani ties still serve as a major obstacle to better ties between Beijing and New Delhi. New Delhi remains suspicious of the "all-weather" Sino-Pakistani partnership, especially in defense cooperation such as the joint development of fighter aircraft and Chinese assistance in constructing strategic port facilities in the Pakistani city of Gwadar. However, unlike in the past, China no longer supports Pakistan unconditionally and has altered its stance on the Kashmir issue from a pro-Pakistan position to now viewing the issue as a bilateral matter.[117]

During the Kargil conflict, China took a neutral position and played the role of informal mediator by hosting separate visits from the Pakistani and Indian Foreign Ministers; after the then-Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was unable to enlist Chinese support during his visit to Beijing, he ordered the withdrawal of troops and ceased Pakistan's support for Muslim insurgents.[118] However, Yahuda, of the London School of Economics, notes that China does continue to indirectly support Islamabad through the provision of weapons.[119]

Jing-dong Yuan seems to doubt, at least somewhat, China's ability to maintain a neutral stance on Kashmir:

> To some extent, China realizes the impossibility of maintaining even neutrality in the Indo-Pakistani conflict: whatever China does, it will incur resentment from one or the other side.[120]

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[115] Mohan Malik, "China and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, December 1, 2000.
Sujit Dutta "China's Emerging Power and Military Role: Implications for South Asia", in *In China's Shadow: Regional Perspectives on Chinese Foreign Policy and Military Development*, ed. Jonathan Pollack and Richard Yang, RAND Corporation, 1998, pp. 91-115.

[116] Tarique Niazi., "Thunder in Sino-Pakistani Relations", *China Brief*, Vol. 6, No.5, 2006.

[117] Jing-dong Yuan, "Chinese Perspectives on a Rising India", *World Politics Review*, November 30, 2008.

[118] Frazier, 2000.

[119] Michael Yahuda, "China and the Kashmir Crisis", BBC, June 2, 2002.

[120] Jing-dong, 2001.
Sumit Ganguly, "Will Kashmir Stop India's Rise?", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2006.

Although a certain degree of tension in Kashmir serves Beijing's interest by pinning down Indian security forces on its western frontiers, it is not in China's interest to see an all-out Indo-Pakistani war or to witness Pakistan's collapse.[121] Nonetheless, supplying small arms and light weapons would serve this objective well as, unless supplied in massive numbers, small arms alone are unlikely to allow Pakistan-backed militants to wage a large-scale war against India but would provide them with the capabilities to engage in a relatively "safer" low-intensity conflict (LIC) that involves the occasional flare-up. India's difficulties with Pakistan have "consumed India's energies and made it difficult to realize its ambitions."[122]

Indo-Japanese Relations: Lacking Vision and Independence

India and Japan have begun to conduct joint anti-piracy operations, agreed to new joint sea-lane security measures, and participated in trilateral naval exercises with the U.S. along the Pacific coastline of East Asia.[123] However, what likely caused the most anxiety in Beijing was the June 2007 meeting involving the U.S., India, Australia, and Japan that focused on a variety of regional issues, although the parties involved claimed that the topics of security and defense were not discussed. Nonetheless, Malabar CY 07-2, a large-scale naval exercise, occurred in the Bay of Bengal that involved both American and Indian aircraft carriers in addition to U.S. naval vessels and warships from Japan, Australia, and Singapore.[124] In response to the meeting, Beijing issued a demarche to all four nations demanding that they explain their motivations for organizing the gathering.[125] It is noteworthy that American unipolarity offers India far more attractive advantages than any prospective multipolar arrangement that involves China due to imbalances in power between China and India.[126]

India is simultaneously expanding its participation in multilateral security initiatives as well as deepening its bilateral defense cooperation with great powers like the U.S. and Japan as well as key regional actors like Indonesia, Vietnam, and Singapore. Long viewed as marginal to the region, since the mid-1990s India has been focused on returning to the East Asian mainstream. With the exception of the forum for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), India is now a member of all the region's institutions, including the East Asia Summit (EAS). Further, the intensity of India's current military diplomacy can be gauged from the range of initiatives since the annual ARF meeting in Kuala Lumpur in July 2006. At the end of 2006, Indian

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121 Malik, 2003.

122 Jing-dong, 2001, p. 985.

123 James Clad, "Convergent Chinese and Indian Perspectives on the Global Order", in *The India-China Relationship - Rivalry and Engagement*, ed. Francine Frankel and Harry Harding, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 267-293.
Johnson and McGregor, 2007.

124 Sandeep Dikshit, "Biggest joint naval exercise in Bay of Bengal in September", The Hindu, July 13, 2007.
"Navy spreads it wings with largest war games off of eastern coast", Indian Express, August 1, 2007.

125 Dikshit, 2007.

126 Tellis, 2004.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh travelled to Tokyo to proclaim a strategic partnership, which includes a strong defense component, with Japan. Following this, in April 2007 India conducted its first trilateral naval exercises with the U.S. and Japan off the coast of Guam thus suggesting India's increasing naval profile in East Asian waters.[127]

We are presently witnessing a crucial period of strategic flux in Asia, and there is much that India and Japan can accomplish if they work together but so far there is scant evidence that they are willing to do so independently of Washington. Pant notes that India's ties with Japan have come a long way since May 1998, when a chill set in after India's nuclear tests, with Japan imposing sanctions and suspending its overseas development assistance (ODA). Since then, however, the changing strategic milieu in the Asia-Pacific region has brought the two countries together—so much so that the October 2010 visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Japan resulted in the unfolding of a roadmap to transform a low-key relationship into a major strategic partnership. But realities on the ground in Asia are changing rapidly and Pant believes that India and Japan need to respond more proactively.[128] However, thus far there have not been any major diplomatic or strategic initiatives that have occurred outside of the American-led framework. In the concluding section (Behavioral Patterns and Prognosis for Sino-Indian Rivalry) this work discusses the various difficulties associated with partnering with India, such as domestic political instability and policy inconsistency/incoherence, and how this can limit the extent of the much-discussed burgeoning Indo-American relationship. These same restrictions apply to Japan and they become even more salient given the relative lack of diplomatic leverage that Tokyo holds. In order for the relationship to meaningfully expand, India and Japan would have to move beyond basic shared concerns over China and sea lane security but do so in a manner acceptable to Washington. This is an unlikely prospect at present as it runs the risk of decreasing American influence in the region at a time when the country's top strategists appear to have "rediscovered" Asia's crucial importance for American national interests.

Nonetheless, the decision by the two leaders to explore the possibility of bilateral cooperation in the development, recycling, and reuse of rare earth metals is a sign that recent Chinese actions are pushing New Delhi and Tokyo somewhat closer together. China's rise is the most significant variable in the Asian geostrategic landscape today and both India and Japan would like to see a constructive China playing a larger role in solving regional and global problems. However, concerns in both nations are growing about China's assertive diplomatic and military posture, as exemplified in events relating to the collision of a Chinese fishing boat and Japanese Coast Guard vessels near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and in rising tensions in Sino-Indian border areas. China's attempts to test the diplomatic and military mettle of its neighbors in the South China Sea and along the Sino-Indian border will likely bring Japan and India even closer.[129]

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127 Mohan, 2007.

128 Harsh Pant, "Delhi and Tokyo Need to Get Serious", Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 29, 2010.

129 Ibid.

In the post-Cold War era (since the 1990s), Japanese ODA to India increased substantially. Japan provided approximately ¥184.89 billion (US$ 2.2. billion) in loans to India in FY2006. The commitment was an increase of 18.9 percent over the previous year, and was the highest of yen loans to India. Since 2003 India has been the largest recipient of Japanese ODA and the cumulative amount of Japan's loans to India adds up to approximately ¥2,817 billion (US$33.6 billion). Further, until 2006, the cumulative amount of grant aid provided by Japan to India amounted to ¥86.69 billion (US$1 billion).[130] The deliberate intention to enhance the economic relationship over the last few years is highlighted by the Japanese assistance in building the Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor among other major projects. Researchers at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations take their argument one step further:

> "…India and Japan should as mature nations, find their own reasons for – to use another term that is much in vogue in India's neighborhood – an "all-weather" partnership, instead of relying on the U.S. to egg them on or on China to scare them into one. India will also need to keep track of the changes in Japanese policy, including the domestic debate over Article 9, to enable a more sustainable and long-term policy of defense cooperation with Japan."[131]

The Annual Bilateral Summit in New Delhi on December 29, 2009 was a stepping stone in the relationship between India and Japan. During the summit, Yukio Hatoyama and Manmohan Singh held discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues and reaffirmed that Japan and India share common values and strategic interests. They pledged to further develop their Strategic and Global Partnership in an effort to strengthen their bilateral relations and ensure peace and prosperity throughout the region and the world.[132] Japan and India also signed a "Joint Statement on the Advancement of the Strategic and Global Partnership" and a "Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India" in October 2008, providing a major boost to bilateral relations. This is only the third security pact that India has signed with another country, following the U.S. and Australia. Other accords include the India and Japan agreement towards greater security cooperation; better trade, investment and economic relations; environmental and energy cooperation; combined efforts to combat terrorism; nuclear non-proliferation and reform of the United Nations Security Council.[133] However, beyond joint declarations and non-specific agreements, there has been remarkably little follow-up action on the strategic front. The most likely explanation for this is that, despite feeling considerably anxious about the future security architecture of Asia, Japan remains apprehensive and indecisive regarding the kind of strategic role that it intends to play

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130 PG Rajamohan, Dil Bahadur Rahut, and Jabin Jacob, "Changing Paradigm of Indo-Japan Relations: Opportunities and Challenges", Working Paper No. 212, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, April 2008.

131 Ibid, p. 20.

132 Nabeel Mancheri, "India's Deepening Relations with Japan", East Asia Forum, February 25, 2010.

133 Ibid.

aside from assisting to secure sea lanes and participating in peacekeeping operations in Southeast Asia.

The Burgeoning Indo-American Strategic Partnership: At China's Expense?

George W. Bush stepped into office determined to consolidate U.S. primacy in the face of prospective geopolitical flux caused by new rising powers in Asia such as China. With a worldview shaped greatly by the imperative of successfully managing great power relations, Bush and his advisers saw the necessity for a transformed relationship with India. A friendly India would not only be an important balancing partner vis-à-vis a rising China, but, from Bush's perspective, it could also assist the U.S. in managing proliferation, enhancing security in the region, and spreading democracy in the developing world.[134] With an unprecedented clarity, Bush signaled his intent to consolidate this new relationship on several occasions, even before his election. The issue of missile defense figured prominently both because of its centrality to the Bush administration's priorities and because it cut across a range of Indian interests, including acceptance in the new global nuclear regime, achievement of equilibrium in American-Indian-Russian relations, and enhanced technology cooperation between India and the U.S.[135]

Unlike the people of other middle powers such as Indonesia, Brazil, and Nigeria, Indians believe that their country has both a destiny and an obligation to play a large role on the international stage. India and China are the world's only major states that embody grand civilizations. India also has an established tradition of seeking to speak for the vast majority of the world, especially its poorest and most underrepresented people, and this largely explains its demands for a seat on the UN Security Council. However, to be sure, India also has practical economic and strategic reasons for staking a claim to great-power status. In 1998 it joined the World Trade Organization, and with this opening to the world's markets, both as an importer and an exporter, India wants a larger voice in setting the rules and norms of the international economy.[136]

Strategic relations between the U.S. and India have expanded considerably in recent years. The emergence of Islamist terrorism as a major security threat to the U.S. created a situation where the primary national security interests of the two countries converged. At the same time, both the U.S. and India are formulating new approaches for dealing with a growing China. As a result, the two countries have valuable opportunities to cooperate both in combating terrorism and fostering stability in Asia. Military and political initiatives for such cooperation are underway. However, India's tensions with Pakistan pose a challenge to U.S. policy formulations.[137] The

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134 Ashley Tellis, "The Evolution of U.S.-Indian Ties – Missile Defense in an Emerging Strategic Relationship", *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Spring 2006, pp. 113-151.

135 Ibid.

136 Stephen Cohen, "India Rising", *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Summer 2000.

137 Rollie Lal and Rajesh Rajagopalan, "U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue", RAND Corporation, 2004.

security situation in Afghanistan is another critical area for both the U.S. and India.[138]

This growing American-Indian relationship has also led to joint military exercises in Alaska in order to boost India's high-altitude war-fighting capabilities in northern Kashmir where it faces Pakistan and China, the U.S.' supply of hardware including radars, aircraft engines, and surveillance equipment, training of Indian special forces, and agreement to share intelligence.[139] Also worrisome to Beijing is that India's growing military ties with the U.S. have enabled New Delhi to receive substantive portions of military equipment from both the U.S. and Russia.[140]

India's rival Pakistan has been a critical ally in the U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan, providing the U.S. access to bases, ports, and air space. Pakistan also permitted the U.S. to use Special Forces and agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to track down al Qaeda and Taliban fugitives both within Pakistan's tribal border area and elsewhere within Pakistani territory. Even though there is broad consensus in the U.S. government that Pakistan's support has been crucial, the future ability of Pakistan to contribute positively to the so-called WoT is an open question and is contingent upon a number of domestic and external factors as well as its fundamentally different threat perception of terrorism from that of the U.S..[141]

Conversely, American officials describe India as an important *informal* ally in the global antiterror efforts. India is described as such by American analysts because it is not *formally* part of the global WoT but has been a key *indirect* supporter of the effort. Thus, while India is widely regarded as a coalition partner in the WoT within Washington, New Delhi does not see itself in this way. Indian (and some American) government representatives stress that India has neither been asked to participate in the global coalition nor has it deliberately contributed to it. India prefers to see counterterrorism as its core strategic interest and a major source of strategic consonance with the U.S.[142]

For example, while the U.S. may view the escort of high-value vessels by the Indian Navy through the Strait of Malacca as direct assistance to the WoT, India sees it as a military-to-military engagement that coincides with its vision of India-U.S. strategic relations, of which counterterrorism is a key component. American South Asia expert Christine Fair believes that India is more accurately characterized as a diffuse supporter of a globalized fight against terrorism which it undertakes out of its own strategic self-interest. Her argument is that this difference in characterization is not functional but rather perceptual and that it is as important to note how New Delhi sees itself as it is to note how Washington views New Delhi. Despite these differences, India's contribution to the fight against terror has become a significant

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138 Ibid.

139 Malik, 2003.

140 Rong Ying, "Can India Become a Military Power?", *Beijing Review*, February 28, 2002, pp. 13-15.

141 Christine Fair, "The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with India and Pakistan", RAND Corporation, 2004.

142 Ibid.

dimension of bilateral engagement with the U.S. in part because both states claim to share a similar threat perception.[143] Ashley Tellis concurs and also notes that:

> "History demonstrates that India can cooperate with the United States in many situations when the two nations have differing interests, as long as India is convinced that there is a broader strategic convergence between Washington and New Delhi, and that its own actions can be implemented quietly and inconspicuously."[144]

Apart from its positive contributions to U.S. counter-terrorism efforts, India demonstrated its importance in 2002 for its ability to substantially disrupt U.S. operations in Afghanistan. For 10 months in 2002, India employed a massive buildup of troops along the Pakistani border as a part of its coercive diplomacy to punish Pakistan for the assault on the Indian Parliament perpetrated by Pakistani-backed militants. Moreover, India's position against Pakistan is continuing to harden because Islamabad still clings tenaciously to its strategy of proxy war in Indian-held Kashmir despite strong international pressure to abandon this approach. This is a potentially serious area of disagreement between the U.S. and India and between the U.S. and Pakistan.[145]

Concerned about the emerging threats from Pakistan and the predominant position of China, there has been an acceleration of efforts between India and the U.S. to jointly develop a ballistic missile defense (BMD) system. The pressure seems to have been applied by the Indian armed forces as the missile shield would provide cover against inter-continental ballistic missiles. The system under discussion features radar and anti-missile missiles, or interceptors, which are able to destroy incoming ballistic missiles that are possibly nuclear-tipped, both of which China and Pakistan possess.[146] If India acquires a credible BMD capacity, it could complicate the border dispute as it could lead to more bold actions taken by Indian leaders who believe (likely incorrectly) that India can negate PLA missiles thus prompting them to assess additional military options outside of the initial conflict zone. If the Chinese want to avoid such a scenario, PLA's ground forces' speedy response (to present New Delhi with a fait accompli) and effective, pre-emptive asymmetric strikes on Indian missile and non-missile infrastructure, such as assets in Assam, will be key.

Although the U.S.–India civilian nuclear cooperation initiative, in principle, removed many American obstacles to nuclear trade with India, there are still many constraints to securing U.S. licenses for controlled high technology or dual-use technology. These difficulties arise partly because bureaucratic reforms in Washington have not kept pace with the dramatic changes occurring at the policy level and also because bilateral instruments assuring the U.S. government that Indian importers would only seek such technologies licitly and would guard against their

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143 Ibid.

144 Ashley Tellis, "Manmohan Singh Visits Washington: Sustaining U.S.-Indian Cooperation Amid Differences", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief 85, November 2009, p. 8.

145 Fair, 2004.

146 Siddharth Srivastava, "India and the US talk missile defense", *Asia Times*, January 15, 2009.

misuse or unauthorized re-export are often not yet in place. Current discussions are aimed at securing an agreement that would rectify these problems in order to accelerate the pace of high-technology trade.[147]

The most conspicuous achievements thus far in defense cooperation have been in the area of bilateral exercises, personnel exchanges, high-level and unit visits, military education and training, and officer and unit exchanges. The objective of these multidimensional activities has been to increase mutual familiarity of the armed forces on both sides in order to advance toward the goal of interoperability, which will be essential if the two militaries need to "combine arms" in future peace and stability missions.[148] Current U.S.–India military exercises are regular, involve all war-fighting arms, and implicate major military formations on both sides—interactions that will be made even easier once New Delhi signs the Logistics Support Agreement, which would rationalize the costs borne by each country. All military interactions are overseen by separate service steering groups, which ultimately report to the Defense Policy Group co-chaired by the U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy and the Indian Defense Secretary.[149]

However, cooperation on counterinsurgency, an important aspect of security for both countries, has not reached its full potential, and Cohen has testified in Congress that more can be done by both governments to exchange relevant ideas and training practices. Still, Cohen also notes that India and the Soviet Union never had military-to-military ties during the Cold War of the kind that India and the U.S. have today. U.S.-India cooperation during the 2004-05 tsunami relief efforts was instructive and groundbreaking, but that remains the standout example of military cooperation.[150] Nonetheless, Stephen Cohen critically notes that the most significant factor of the new U.S.-India relationship is that it is not based on relations between the two governments, but rather the relationship between their two societies and their economies. Indian-Americans are among the most successful of the recent immigrant groups to the U.S. The U.S. remains immensely popular in India, particularly in the cities.[151]

Behavioral Patterns and Prognosis for Sino-Indian Rivalry

Johnston has previously noted that with more rigorous criteria for determining whether a state's foreign policy is status quo or revisionist oriented than heretofore have been used in international relations theorizing, it is hard to conclude that China is clearly a revisionist state operating outside, or barely inside, the boundaries of a so-called international community. Rather, to the extent that we can identify an international community on major global issues, China has become more integrated

147 Tellis, 2009.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.

150 Stephen Cohen, "More Than Just the 123 Agreement: The Future of U.S.-India Relations" Testimony to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, June 25, 2008.

151 Ibid.

into and more cooperative within international institutions than ever before.[152] Moreover, the evidence that China's leaders are actively trying to balance against U.S. power to undermine an American-dominated unipolar system and replace it with a multipolar system is murky. The multipolarity discourse is not a clear guide to understanding Chinese preferences, and behaviorally it does not appear at the moment that China is balancing very vigorously against American military power or U.S. interests as its leaders have defined them. The U.S. policy debate on the implications of rising Chinese power for U.S. interests and for regional and global peace needs to be more sensitive to ambiguities in the evidence about Chinese foreign policy.[153]

However, the quality and quantity of revisionism in a state's policy are not static properties and Johnston notes that there are two major factors that could increase the level of revisionism in the Chinese leadership's preferences. One is domestic social unrest while the second factor would be an emerging security dilemma whereby China's revisionism on the Taiwan issue, combined with U.S. political and military responses, leads each side to see the other as fundamentally opposed to its basic security interests. The evidence for this kind of interactivity is suggestive, but worrisome. In principle, if a security dilemma is emerging at the level of discourse, we should expect to see an increase in the frequency and volume of conflictual discourses. Hardliners on both sides should be making references to each other to justify an argument that the other side is threatening basic values and interests. However, we are not witnessing such behavior at present.[154]

Since 1949, China’s use of force in its territorial disputes has varied widely. China has participated in 23 territorial conflicts with other states but has used force in only six. Some of these disputes, especially those with India and Vietnam, were notably violent while others, such as China’s dispute with the Soviet Union, risked nuclear war. Although China has been willing to use force in some of its conflicts, it has seized little land that it did not control before the outbreak of combat. Moreover, China has compromised more frequently than it has used force, offering concessions in 17 of its territorial disputes.[155]

China has been less belligerent than leading theories of international relations might have predicted for a state with its characteristics. For American advocates of offensive realism, China has rarely exploited its military superiority either to bargain hard for the territory that it claims or to seize it through force. China has likewise not become increasingly aggressive in managing its territorial disputes as its relative military and economic power has grown since 1990. For scholars studying the effects of nationalism, China has been willing to offer territorial concessions despite historical legacies of external victimization and territorial dismemberment that suggest instead assertiveness in conflicts over sovereignty. For those focused on the role of domestic political institutions, China has escalated only a few of its territorial

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152 Johnston, 2003.

153 Ibid

154 Ibid.

155 Fravel, 2007/2008.

conflicts despite a highly centralized, authoritarian political system with limited internal constraints on the use force.[156]

Regime insecurity best explains China's many attempts to compromise in its territorial disputes. Most of China's disputes are located on its long land border adjacent to frontier regions where the authority of the regime has been weak. Ethnic minorities dominate these frontiers, which make up more than half of the country and were weakly governed before 1949. During periods of regime insecurity, especially in the event of ethnic unrest near its international boundaries, China's leaders have been much more willing to offer concessions in exchange for cooperation that strengthens their control of these areas, such as denying external support to separatists or affirming recognition of Chinese sovereignty over these regions.[157] Regime insecurity also best explains China's pattern of cooperation and delay in its territorial disputes. China's leaders have compromised when faced with internal threats to regime security—the revolt in Tibet, the instability following the Great Leap Forward, the legitimacy crisis after the Tiananmen upheaval, and separatist violence in Xinjiang. The timing of compromise efforts, official documents, and statements by China's leaders demonstrate that internal threats, not external ones, account for why and when China pursued cooperation.[158]

In this research there have been wide-ranging discussions on various areas of potential rivalry between China on one side and India partnered with the U.S. on the other. One of the most cited examples is increased maritime competition in the Indian Ocean, something which is linked to China's so-called string of pearls strategy. Pessimists claim that conflict is almost inevitable and highlight mutually antagonistic great power self-images and a lack of institutionalized security mechanisms between the established powers (India and the U.S.) and the potential challenger (China). They also point to China's supposed strategy to strategically encircle India thereby reducing New Delhi's freedom of action within the subcontinent. However, this argument makes several false assumptions that, when deconstructed, clearly highlight its fallaciousness. First, it assumes that there is sufficient geopolitical space for strategic rivalry thereby also suggesting that there is a deficient amount of diplomacy. Multiple U.S.-led maritime initiatives centering on non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, and the maintenance of the freedom of the seas have achieved a nearly universal consensus (with a few notable exceptions) thus resulting in a low level of strategic suspicion in the Indian Ocean. The current arrangement does not overtly run counter to Chinese national interests while Beijing is also steadily reducing its dependence on the transportation of energy resources by sea.[159] The PLAN, while a formidable force in green and brown waters, is presently unable to challenge American and Indian naval dominance and Beijing lacks a regional partner that could enable it to achieve strategic parity.

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156 Ibid.

157 Fravel, 2005.

158 Ibid.

159 For more in-depth analysis, see Ryan Clarke, "Chinese Energy Security: The Myth of the PLAN's Frontline Status", August 2010, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College.

Second, it makes dangerous macro-level assumptions regarding China's strategic intent without analyzing Beijing's actual behavior. As other landmark studies have confirmed[160] post-1949 China has been remarkably flexible regarding most of its Asian neighbors (again, with a few notable exceptions) even when China enjoys clear conventional military superiority. While past behavior is indeed a useful indicator, so too is an analysis of China's objective interests in the Indian Ocean. Given the array of U.S.-leaning states in East, Southeast, and Central Asia, it is clearly not in China's interest to see similar developments take place between India and the U.S. Despite much discussion regarding India as a "natural ally" of the U.S., there remain major impediments to this bilateral relationship, the most salient of which are India's own political instability and policy inconsistency/incoherence, America's arms sales to Pakistan, Washington's position on the Kashmir dispute, as well as the political substance of a post-NATO Afghanistan. However, any overt Chinese effort to upset the balance of power in the Indian Ocean would very likely decrease the importance of those potential sources of strategic disconnect and rather accelerate India-U.S. defense cooperation. Once such a trend gained momentum, it would likely become an irreversible force in its own right much to the detriment of Chinese security.

Thirdly, and maybe most importantly, it assumes a broader trend of deterioration in China-U.S. relations thus inflaming other regional flashpoints (not solely those between India and China) and prompting a debilitating security dilemma between Beijing and Washington. Once again, evidence of this occurring is very scant. In 2010, Chinese *rhetoric* was at times strident but was followed with very little action on the strategic front. This was true for the 2010 tensions over U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, territorial disputes in the South China and East China Seas, and large-scale U.S. military exercises with South Korea and Japan following the sinking of the Cheonan and the North Korean shelling of South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island. While China did carry out some of its own military exercises,[161] it made no attempt to actually alter the status quo. Rather than representing a decisive shift in Chinese strategic thought and practice, recent actions appear to reaffirm the notion that China is not yet a revisionist state. Whether this trend will hold over the long term is likely an impossible question to answer with a reasonable degree of accuracy and is beyond

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[160] For example, see Evan Mederios, "China's International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification", RAND Corporation, 2009.
Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", International Security, Vol. 19, No.4, Spring 1995.
Alastair Iain Johnston, Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History, Princeton University Press, 1995.
Andrew Scobell, China's Use of Military Force – Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
Michael Swaine and Ashley Tellis, "Interpreting China's Grand Strategy – Past, Present, and Future", RAND Corporation, 2000.
Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?", International Security, Vol. 27, No. 4, Spring, 2003, pp. 5-56.
M. Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation – Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes", International Security, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2005, pp. 46-83.
M. Taylor Fravel, "Power Shifts and Escalation – Explaining China's Use of Force in Territorial Disputes", International Security, Vol. 32, No.3, Winter 2007/2008, pp. 44-83.

[161] For example, see Ryan Clarke and Zhu Zhiqun, "Recent American and Chinese Military Exercises: Strategic Signaling", *East Asian Policy*, October-December 2010.

the scope of this research. However, what is objectively clear is that bilateral maritime disputes between China and India are unlikely without broader systemic pressure stemming from sustained China-U.S. security competition, something which does not presently exist.

Fourthly, it assumes a Chinese prioritization of South Asia over East Asia (or at least a view that both regions are of equal importance), which is also empirically not the case. The vast majority of Chinese diplomatic and political capital is dedicated towards East Asia followed by Southeast Asia. Aside from a defense-based relationship with Pakistan which has its roots in the Cold War period, China has a much more fragmented approach towards the rest of South Asia. As China's strategists and political leadership have clearly assessed that the country's most serious security threats emanate from the other East Asian countries, it is the region in which they are willing to be more assertive and take risks, which is exactly what we witnessed in 2010. However, 2010 was a difficult year for China which saw the U.S.-South Korea alliance reinvigorated, some key ASEAN states aligning themselves closer with Washington, and Japan rapidly diversifying its supply base of rare earths while also beginning to discuss re-militarization more seriously. America also declared that the defense of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands falls within the parameters of the U.S.-Japan alliance. It is important to note that all of these occurred in response to remarkably little Chinese overt action. As such, it is exceedingly difficult to see a scenario develop in the near future where China would be willing to run similar or even greater risks (India is a nuclear weapons state with a formidable missile capability) in South Asia, a region of lesser importance in the minds of Beijing's top strategists. Further, India's military modernization, as discussed earlier, faces serious political, organizational, and doctrinal challenges thus making it a less immediate strategic challenge than Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan. However, this can change if India and the U.S. begin to cooperate in missile defense.

The Sino-Indian border dispute is a cause of slightly greater concern as the two countries are in mutually antagonistic and unchanging positions (remember Hassner's entrenchment process) and there really are a diplomatic deficit and a growing differential in comprehensive national power which increasingly favors China. For Western realists, this situation is one of almost guaranteed conflict. However, this theoretical framework and analytical methodology, which is largely the product of the Western experience, does not necessarily apply in this instance. Caprioli and Trumbore have shown us that powers which are most likely to use violence first in a border dispute tend to be revisionist states which then go on to be defeated.[162] India has already gone through its revisionist period when it forged strong ties with the Soviet Union during the Cold War and took a more aggressive stance towards China. This strategy led to an embarrassing defeat in the 1962 border war which conditioned Indian strategic thought for decades after. While India has begun to become more assertive in its foreign policy dealings in other regions, it still lacks the military capabilities to eject the PLA from disputed territory. Further, even if/when India acquires the necessary capabilities for this specific theater, New Delhi lacks the strategic space within its own region to engage in hostile action without running the high risk of India's near neighbors, namely Pakistan, seeking to take advantage of India's distraction or even actively supporting China.

[162] Caprioli and Trumbore, 2006.

Some may counter these points by claiming that the key variable in this equation is actually the U.S. However, this overstates both the strategic potential of the Indo-American relationship as well as America's core national interests in this specific theater. For America's role to become decisive in the Sino-Indian border dispute, India would have to become a junior partner in the relationship and outsource its security to Washington, something which India has never done in the post-independence period (since 1947). A country with over one billion people, a world-class navy, and (rightly or wrongly) a great power self-image does not usually enter into "camps" led by others.

America also does not have core national interests at stake here. The worst nightmare of many Indian strategists is China moving to cut off the Siliguri Corridor (or the "Chicken's Neck") which connects insurgency-wracked northeast India to the rest of the country. It is critical to note that there is a strong degree of irrationality and anti-empiricism in these concerns as China has not taken decisive strategic actions to create this policy option nor have top Chinese leaders or strategists advocated for it. However, put somewhat crudely, even if such an event were to occur, the damage to core American interests in this region, namely maintaining the freedom of the seas and preventing the rise of a regional hegemon, would be minimal. As such, with low prospects of India becoming a junior partner in its relationship with the U.S. combined with a lack of core national interests being at stake for Washington, the U.S. is highly unlikely to take real risks vis-à-vis China in this theater. Regardless, this particular debate is highly speculative by its very nature as it is based upon "what if" scenarios rather than "what is" or even "what has been."

What then are we likely to observe within the U.S.-India-China triangle? The most probable answer is a stability-instability paradox with Asian characteristics in which low-level disputes may occur but are unlikely to escalate into large scale armed conflict. As the stability-instability paradox again has its roots in Western political thought regarding nuclear weapons and mutually assured destruction (MAD) during the Cold War, the concept requires some adjustment when applied to this context. Nuclear weapons have indeed introduced a degree of stability in the region and have served to raise the stakes in a conflict between India and Pakistan to an unacceptable level thereby reducing its likelihood. However, low-level conflicts continue sporadically, namely in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and with occasional acts of urban terrorism, such as the November 2008 Mumbai attacks which were planned in Pakistan.[163]

Though precise parallels within the Sino-Indian context are difficult to make, the basic concepts remain consistent. Even if we wholly and uncritically accept Indian accusations (which are unproven) that China is currently providing small arms and light weapons to several insurgent groups in India's northeast while small PLA ground forces are making "incursions" into "Indian" territory, we can still see the stability-instability paradox at work. China enjoys clear conventional superiority (as well as superior nuclear and missile forces) in this theater, yet Beijing remains unwilling to even engage in coercive diplomacy for a variety of reasons, the most

[163] Michael Kreppan, "The Stability-Instability Paradox, Misperception, and Escalation Control in South Asia", Henry Stimson Center, May 2003.

relevant of which is the perceived high risks associated with engaging in overtly hostile action coupled with low prospects for valuable strategic gains. Unlike in other potential conflict zones, such as Taiwan and the East and South China Seas, the American role does not alter the status quo appreciably. This is likely to remain the case even if the Indo-American strategic relationship matures considerably and forces become interoperable.

In closing, the Sino-Indian strategic relationship is likely to be characterized by macro-stability with occasional micro-level disputes associated with issues such as the border dispute, Chinese naval activities in the Indian Ocean, and China's defense relationship with Pakistan. However, these disputes are likely to follow a largely predictable diplomatic path and do not run the risk of serious escalation. This can be put down to the stability-instability paradox as well as the fact that neither India or China is a revisionist state who is interested in re-igniting the border dispute while America also has no core national interest there. China is also unlikely to behave aggressively in the Indian Ocean for fear of inadvertently accelerating the development of Indo-American strategic ties. As the border dispute and Indian Ocean are most prominent areas of potential dispute between the two nations, pessimism regarding the next several years appears unwarranted. However, these generally positive assessments are predicated on a continuously stable relationship between the U.S. and China and the absence of greater systemic pressure in Asia which this produces. Despite much analyses and many predictions, 2010 could be classified as the "Year of Rhetoric" in China-U.S. relations. The emergence of security dilemma between Washington and Beijing can alter this though we do not see any evidence of this happening in East or Southeast Asia. Conversely, an India equipped with advanced American missile defense technology which is deployed in sensitive areas near disputed territory is the context which is most likely to produce a security dilemma along with the various mutually reinforcing miscalculations that tend to follow.