

# THE U.S.-INDIA DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP

*An Update for President Obama's State Visit to India, November 2010*



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For further information about NBR, contact:

The National Bureau of Asian Research  
1414 NE 42nd Street, Suite 300  
Seattle, Washington 98105

206-632-7370 Phone

206-632-7487 Fax

[nbr@nbr.org](mailto:nbr@nbr.org) E-mail

<http://www.nbr.org>

THE NATIONAL BUREAU *of* ASIAN RESEARCH  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In light of President Barack Obama's impending November 2010 visit to India, this report revisits and updates key findings from a 2009 workshop that explored India's strategic environment and defense policies to inform evolving dynamics in the U.S.-India defense relationship.

### MAIN FINDINGS

- India faces a complex strategic environment of both extant and emerging challenges in the region as well as at home. Indian strategy has emphasized responding by pursuing maximum flexibility in terms of security partners but without diminishing the priority of domestic development.
- China looms large in Indian strategic thinking and defense planning. Indian concerns about Chinese infrastructure development in southern Tibet have been matched by force developments in the northeastern provinces that increase the possibility of tension.
- Pakistan continues to represent the greatest near-term military challenge to India, both in conventional ways and in its use of proxy insurgents. Moreover, in high-risk scenarios, Indian defense planners see potential Chinese military involvement in an Indo-Pak conflict, which would present a two-front challenge for India.
- Internal defense challenges include doctrinal issues, personnel shortfalls, and a structure that ill-serves India's peacetime and operational functions.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The U.S. and India continue to make enormous strides toward the type of strategic relationship that befits the status of each as a leading democracy but without pursuing a de facto alliance-like relationship. Obstacles to closer ties remain, and in developing a productive relationship, these difficulties must be managed in order to fulfill the promise of the relationship.
- In the developing Indian-U.S. strategic relationship, defense relations are a major component. Much of this aspect of the relationship centers around increased Indian willingness to buy and integrate U.S. defense systems, a calculation which is affected by both a set of assumptions at the top-level about new political realities and an Indian system that is ill-structured to absorb massive amounts of U.S.-produced systems.
- While arms sales are important, neither side is well-served by a "transactional" relationship that measures progress toward a strategic relationship by the volume of arms sales.

As President Barack Obama visits India in early November, he likely does so with many questions in mind. Will the United States and India realize the promise of a new strategic partnership that becomes a stabilizing constant in Asia and broader international affairs? Will trade challenges and structural barriers on both sides be resolved in ways that strengthen institutions and facilitate freer and more open commerce? And will the storied military establishments in each country become ever-greater partners in addressing extant military threats and providing for enhanced regional stability?

In view of this last question, this report revisits and updates key findings from the workshop, “India’s Strategic Environment and Defense Policies,”<sup>1</sup> that the National Bureau of Asian Research held in partnership with India’s Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in New Delhi on April 23–25, 2009. The report also draws on insights from various other NBR projects over the 2009–10 timeframe, including two volumes from the *Strategic Asia* book series, the annual People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Conference held in partnership with the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College, and various other work conducted by NBR on alliances under the rubric of the John M. Shalikashvili Chair in National Security Studies.<sup>2</sup>

## Purpose and Goals of the NBR-ORF Workshop

The purpose of the joint NBR-ORF workshop in 2009 was to examine India’s emergence as an Asian power in the context of the country’s military modernization efforts. Specifically, the initiative examined in-depth the strategic, organizational, operational, and tactical dimensions of India’s security policies and military modernization efforts to assess their implications for India’s regional relations, India’s role as an emerging great power in the global system, and future U.S.-Indian cooperation.

The initiative came at an ideal time in U.S.-India bilateral relations. Recent strides in the relationship, including forward movement in the strategic partnership, as well as the groundbreaking U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement in 2008 and its subsequent implementation agreements, confirmed a dynamic and upward trend in U.S.-India strategic and defense ties. Opportunities for cooperation were also ripe in areas such as maritime security, counterterrorism, military logistics support, nonproliferation, and trade. Yet for all the promise of the budding relationship, there remained a significant need for both countries to better understand each other’s strategic environments, defense assumptions, operational processes, and prospects for bilateral defense cooperation and trade.

There is little doubt that India’s large and professional military, and India’s security establishment more generally, will play a critical role in the country’s exercise of power and, given its history of responsible state behavior, will be a force for stability in Asia and beyond. With the participation of an elite group of primarily Indian policy and security specialists and senior defense analysts,

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<sup>1</sup> The NBR-ORF workshop was co-chaired by NBR senior advisor and the initiative’s principal investigator Ashley J. Tellis of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and by Lt. Gen. (ret.) Vinayak Patankar of ORF. The workshop assembled a senior-level group of American and Indian participants to examine and discuss twelve workshop papers, each of which was prepared by the foremost expert on a topic related to an aspect of India’s armed forces. Reflecting the priority placed on the independent work of the conference, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, and the Russell Family Foundation, as well as U.S. defense companies Lockheed-Martin, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman, helped support the initiative.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the report, quote boxes are used to highlight affirmations by public officials of the report’s themes. All quotes are from senior officials in the U.S. and Indian governments and were made in public forums in the lead-up to Obama’s state visit to India in November 2010.

the workshop examined these issues of Indian security afresh at a time when India's rise to power appeared almost a given.

## Themes in Indian Defense Strategy

Six major themes emerged from discussions during the three-day workshop:

- India's grand strategy adapts to a complex and changing international environment
- Increased strategic trust leads to stronger bilateral U.S.-Indian defense relations
- The China challenge is both strategic and operational
- Pakistan complicates Indian defense planning
- Internal security challenges are a core concern
- Institutional challenges to Indian armed forces modernization weaken capacity

### *Indian Grand Strategy Adapts to a Complex and Changing International Environment*

One workshop participant posited an argument that India is following a strategy with two primary goals, each of which is somewhat at odds with the other. In recognizing the vulnerabilities that India faced in a unipolar world dominated by the United States, New Delhi has in recent years moved closer to Washington to mitigate any negative effects that such a situation might catalyze. At the same time, India is promoting a multipolar world order in which India is one of the poles. This seemingly contradictory path of attempting to both embrace and check the United States strives to achieve a balance in India's great-power relations so that India can have beneficial relations with all.

Participants who were skeptical of the existence of an Indian grand strategy questioned whether India was in fact prepared and capable of undertaking its own security in a multipolar world. Even more fundamentally, these participants questioned whether India's history afforded opportunities for the emergence of such clear strategic formulations. This group suggested that there are multiple impulses that guide Indian strategic thinking. In view of dynamics such as China's military modernization efforts, a burgeoning domestic economy, and increasing opportunity for Indian naval assertiveness, maintaining balanced relationships would seem to be the most prudent course of action as India pursues its own growth path. Further, given India's diverse and vibrant democracy and multiplicity of ethnic and religious groups, the idea of a single grand strategy upon which all these actors agree is improbable, much less likely to remain consistent over time. In part, this may well reflect an imperative in India to focus on domestic challenges.

But a mix of strategic approaches, intentional or not, may help explain the diverse set of defense relationships India has developed, including with its long-time arms supplier Russia as well as

"India's priorities are domestic. India needs and wants a periphery that is stable and free of conflict and India seeks to avoid entangling overseas alliances."

—Indian National Security Advisor Shiv Shankar Menon, September 30, 2010, Washington, D.C.



with European powers and regional states. As well, the dramatic improvement in bilateral relations between New Delhi and Washington in the first decade of the 21st century has also allowed for a burgeoning defense relationship with the United States.

### *Increased Strategic Trust Leads to Stronger U.S.-Indian Defense Relations*

Trends in the Indian-U.S. defense relationship are moving toward ever-closer ties, obstacles notwithstanding. The accomplishment of the civil nuclear agreement was an essential part of the tremendous progress that has been made to date. Intended to achieve practical benefits for the international nuclear and nonproliferation regime, the agreement ensured that a significant portion of Indian materials that had not previously been secured would be brought under the regime's protocols. More importantly, however, the agreement represented an opportunity to begin fashioning a strategic relationship between the world's two largest democracies. The boldness of the initiative matched the huge potential impact.

Repeatedly in workshop discussions, senior Indian leaders affirmed that a national security consensus has coalesced around the value of a strategic partnership with the United States. Although India does not seek, nor would be amenable to, ally-like status with the United States—a point made by many of the workshop participants—New Delhi's "non-alignment hangover" no longer precludes a close relationship with Washington.

While India's change in outlook was aptly credited with setting the stage for closer ties with the United States, the fundamental shift in U.S. policy toward India—as signified by the nuclear deal and declaration of a strategic partnership—was also highlighted by many participants as a catalyst for New Delhi's increased trust toward Washington. Even more than with the tangible benefits of the civilian nuclear cooperation deal and the U.S. decision to sell advanced defense systems to India, the Indian workshop participants were most satisfied with the fact that the new U.S. policy seemed to consider India on its own merits rather than as a hyphenated role player in a three-player game, be it U.S.-India-Pakistan or U.S.-India-China. Moreover, participants readily recognized and appreciated that both the Indian leadership and the American leadership pushed forward with the civil nuclear deal—and all it implied—despite entrenched opposition within their respective governments, which perhaps helped to further solidify the new positive trend in the bilateral relationship.

Yet, as positive as the Indian participants were toward the Bush administration's policies and the strengthened bilateral relationship, they appeared at the time to be uncertain regarding the Obama administration's policies, fearing perhaps that President Obama would return to the traditional approach of understanding India only in the context of the South Asia region, or, in an even more limited approach, back-track to a hyphenated India-Pakistan formulation, rather than view India as an independent global power capable of transcending its region. Some of those initial concerns about the direction of the Obama administration appear to have been mitigated, in large part because of the very positive and high-profile ways in which the administration hosted the inaugural U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue in May 2010, as well as an emerging sense in India that Washington's China policy has become more realistic in 2010 in view of U.S. disappointment in its efforts to harmonize policies with China. It is anticipated that the upcoming visit by Obama to India will help further allay India's concerns.

Strengthened U.S.-India relations at the political level will have positive effects in other areas, including in the defense arena. Increased bilateral military exercises have enhanced operational

confidence in both countries regarding each other's army, navy, and air force capabilities. Moreover, counterterrorism cooperation and mutual support initiatives have greatly accelerated, although, interestingly, the value of these initiatives in enhancing India's defense modernization program was not comprehensively examined in the workshop.

Another area in which strengthened Indian-U.S. ties will have an effect is in support of India's defense procurement and military modernization plans. Reflecting this new reality, the workshop coincided with the ground-breaking ceremony for Lockheed Martin's new C-130J special

operations aircraft facility near Delhi and just after approval of Boeing's \$2.1 billion P-8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft deal. (An additional \$1 billion for four more P-8I has just cleared the Indian Ministry of Defence.)

Indian defense minister A.K. Antony has said that India expects to invest approximately \$50 billion in defense modernization over the next five years. Key programs include helicopters, fighter aircraft, tanks, artillery, aircraft carrier

"We think we have the finest military hardware in the world, and if India is upgrading its defense capabilities, they should buy American."

—U.S. State Department spokesman P. J. Crowley, September 29, 2010, Washington, D.C.

upgrades, and other acquisitions. Important forthcoming program decisions that U.S. firms are closely watching include a \$10 billion decision for 126 multi-role combat aircraft, a \$6 billion program for large transport aircraft, and potential sales of additional maritime aircraft and special operations aircraft. As India continues to lay the groundwork for upgraded capabilities, U.S. firms remain well placed to meet many of the country's requirements.

However, the general consensus among workshop participants was that it will be ten to fifteen years before India is structurally capable of absorbing and maintaining a broad array of new systems from the United States, despite the unreliability of current Russian suppliers. Even when a more robust program of military sales does become possible, Indian representatives made clear that defense procurement numbers ought not be the sole metric by which improved bilateral ties are reflected; India desires a fully formed, non-transactional relationship with the United States.

While increased consideration for U.S. firms in meeting Indian requirements is a natural outgrowth of the new strategic relationship, it remains important to note that the United States is not the only strategic relationship India enjoys, and that these other relationships will necessarily render more complicated India's decisions regarding the award of defense contracts, especially when these other parties also have links to important domestic Indian constituencies. Aptly indicative of these dynamics, in the days immediately after Defense Minister Antony's visit to Washington in early October 2010, high-ranking delegations from France and Russia led by their respective defense ministers visited New Delhi, ostensibly to press for consideration of their own national firms in meeting India's defense program requirements.

"We want a partnership [with the U.S.] based on much more than transactional advantage."

—Indian National Security Advisor Shiv Shankar Menon, September 30, 2010, Washington, D.C.



The path to a real defense partnership with the United States, while already underway, is one with substantial challenges. Whereas there appears to be growing convergence of views at the strategic level, structural obstacles to defense cooperation remain. These challenges include:

- India's decades-long close defense procurement relationship with Russia
- The United States' complicated relationship with Pakistan, including the provision of advanced military equipment, ostensibly to aid the Pakistan Army in fighting the Taliban, but which has capabilities that are fungible, raising concerns in New Delhi that the Indian armed forces might become a target
- A U.S. focus on certain normative agreements in the transfer of defense articles affect the overall bilateral military relationships—e.g., the Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and the Logistics Support Agreements (LSA) to which Indian leaders object—calling into question India's willingness to sign such agreements or even engage in the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program altogether
- India's "offset" policy in which a percentage of an overall contract must result in reinvestment within India's domestic defense establishment. With the scale of defense procurement programs, serious questions remain about the ability of India's defense infrastructure to usefully absorb the influx of offset money
- Indian concerns with the U.S. export control system, which includes key Indian firms on the Entities List. As the United States undertakes fundamental reform of its export control system, Indian entities might see restrictions eased

"India is certainly high on our list in terms of a country [for which]...I would like to see those restrictions eased."

—U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, September 2010, Washington, D.C.

Finally, there is the issue of China. At a strategic level, the United States and India share views about shaping the international environment in ways that facilitate a peaceful rise of China while also undertaking military steps in the event that Beijing assumes a more hostile approach toward asserting international influence. At the regional level, India has important national security concerns regarding China, which was the third major theme of the workshop.

### *The China Challenge is Both Strategic and Operational*

China's rapid and broad military modernization program—now in its third decade—looms large in the psyche of Indian defense planners, especially as New Delhi considers closer ties with Washington. It is a widely held view in Indian defense and security circles that China's ambitious military modernization program may one day facilitate the use of force to resolve conflicting bilateral territorial claims. Indian strategists and planners view China's active infrastructure development programs with concern, especially in the regions of Chinese territory adjacent to contested areas, and worry that road and rail construction for economic development can also facilitate the movement of PLA troops into contested areas. Moreover, participants noted that China might also harbor desires to restrain India's own modernization, even to the point of considering a repeat of the 1962 Sino-Indo cross-border war, a conflict precipitated to "teach India a lesson" for possessing close ties with the United States in that earlier era.

This great fear led to some interesting exchanges between the U.S. and Indian participants at the workshop, particularly as the issue demonstrated the widely different prisms through which each country views China's strategic priorities. Some U.S. participants found India's preoccupation with China to be at odds with their understanding of China's strategic posture

"For me, it's just an academic argument as to whether China has a major role to play in South Asia. Of course, China has a presence in South Asia and has so for a long time. We have had a presence in East Asia for a long time. But that presence has changed and evolved as China has changed, as South Asia has changed and we have changed. And we will continue to do that."

—Indian National Security Advisor  
Shiv Shankar Menon, September 30, 2010,  
Washington, D.C.

and particularly that of the PLA. One former U.S. military officer with extensive expertise on China's military prodded the Indian participants to explore further their concerns that China might be intent on launching another attack in India's northwest border region. This U.S. participant noted that U.S. military analysts have heretofore primarily viewed China's defense posture to be heavily oriented toward Taiwan contingencies, with perhaps the country's claims to territorial seas coming in as a distant second priority, and with potential revisionist actions toward India falling far lower on a list of priorities.

The Indian participants conceded that Taiwan was China's primary strategic concern, yet pointed to the building of railroads and other transportation lines into Tibet as evidence of Beijing's intentions to build up forces along China's southwest border. Left unexplored was whether these enhanced transit routes were directly aimed at India and the build-up of forces along China's southwest border, or whether China's intent was to demonstrate and assert more authority over the Tibetan region. In the workshop, one retired senior Indian Army officer discussed the imperative for India to post new infantry divisions to the country's northeast provinces in response to these Chinese moves, actions which are now coming to pass.

In the maritime domain, workshop participants displayed strong agreement with the "string of pearls" notion that China is pursuing port and access arrangements with friendly nations with littoral access to the Indian Ocean, such as Burma and Pakistan. Whereas Western analysts see these arrangements as elements of a Chinese strategy to help secure energy supplies, Indian workshop participants saw them as also serving to constrain Indian maritime dominance in the region. Further complicating these developments was a sense that if Chinese liquefied natural gas (LNG) and oil pipelines are completed through Burma, PLA Navy ships will be present near the terminals in the Bay of Bengal more regularly.

Perceptions of China's posture toward India aside, the workshop discussion and papers made it clear that China is emerging as India's primary rival in the near to long term in all dimensions. The two countries will not only cooperate and compete for influence in Asia but also by necessity across the globe in an effort to secure the relationships needed to ensure their continued growth trajectories. Competition will arise from their search for energy and mineral resources, as well

as from their increased maritime presence in the Indian Ocean, use and development of space technologies, and military modernization, including in the nuclear realm. Yet this sense of competition held by workshop participants was balanced by the perceived durability of the overall Sino-Indian bilateral relationship and a strong countering view in India that Chinese gains will not necessarily come at India's expense.

Interestingly, assertions by Indian political leaders notwithstanding, workshop participants talked little about constructive roles in regional security that the Indian armed forces might play. While the natural geographical advantage the Indian Navy is afforded was an important consideration, the military role India might play in cooperation with the United States and others was only slightly considered.

### *Pakistan Complicates Indian Defense Planning*

Whereas China is a potential threat, Pakistan presents a real and present challenge to India. The threats are well-known—infiltration of Islamic militants across the Line of Control, “loose nukes,” and destabilization of the regime in Afghanistan leading to the possible targeting of India by radical forces inside Pakistan. In what is perhaps a shift from previous outlooks, there was an apparent willingness to think less about retribution and more about stabilization on India's western front. In fact, one former senior Indian government official participating in the workshop went so far as to say that if Pakistan were to dedicate its forces to counter-Taliban missions, thus leaving only a skeletal force on its eastern border with India, Pakistan would have nothing to fear from India.

The workshop's Indian participants were more concerned with the direction of the Obama administration's policy regarding Pakistan than they were with any of the particular challenges that have weighed down India-Pakistan relations in the past. Indeed, the workshop occurred soon after the announcement of Obama's “Af-Pak” strategy, and many participants were trying to unravel exactly what the new strategy would mean for New Delhi, particularly in the wake of the Bush administration's approach that focused on strengthening U.S.-India relations outside the prism of New Delhi's relationship with Islamabad. Initial reactions toward the strategy were decidedly cool, with one participant maintaining that the new administration's surge strategy in Afghanistan, combined with a political strategy in Pakistan aimed at dispensing billions of dollars in additional aid, could be problematic from India's perspective—views which continue to endure today. According to one of the stronger critiques, the strategy demonstrates that the United States has changed tack to regionally contain—rather than defeat—terrorism, which after the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai places New Delhi in an extremely difficult position. One participant argued that following such a strategy will leave India to bear the brunt of terrorist

“The security of sea lanes of communication is vital in today's world...The Indian Navy has been actively engaged in providing anti-piracy patrolling and escort operations in the Gulf of Aden for over two years now. [Additionally]...we are partnering with other countries in the region to improve the safety of navigation in the region.”

—Indian Minister of Defence A.K. Antony,  
ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting +8,  
October 12, 2010, Hanoi

threats emanating from Pakistan and the Taliban. Moreover, Indian participants argued that Indian commitment and accomplishments in Afghanistan are underappreciated.

Aside from uncertainty over the new administration's policies, India's traditional concerns regarding Pakistan have not disappeared and in many ways have become more acute, although most participants were more worried about state failure in Pakistan and the implications for India's security policies than they were with traditional military challenges emanating from territorial rivalry and the legacy of previous conflicts. At the time of the workshop, the Pakistani government was on the defensive as Taliban insurgents made their way closer to Islamabad and were given latitude to carry out *sharia* law in the areas that they controlled. Such inability on the part of Pakistan's newly elected civilian government to turn back the Taliban fighters and curtail insurgent hostilities has served to magnify India's fears of state failure in Pakistan. Most, if not all, of the workshop participants cast the challenge from Pakistan in those terms.

Interestingly, the discussions of the challenges Pakistan presents were almost dispassionate, even in the wake of the Mumbai terrorist attacks. The attacks were not discussed in great detail during the workshop, almost as if to indicate that the challenges posed by Pakistan and the state's inability to govern are well known, and although very real and dangerous, turning India's focus to the Pakistani threat would only serve to stand in the way of India's greater strategic goals and ambitions. And, while not stated explicitly at the workshop, the fundamental policy shift toward India that the Bush administration pushed forward enabled India to pursue a broader, more global role as a rising great power, with Pakistan becoming somewhat less of a driver in Indian planning.

However, when India's strongly-held security concerns raised about China were layered onto the possibility of conventional military confrontation with Pakistan, participants almost immediately concluded that Indian planners need to prepare for a two-front war. In many potential India-Pakistan conflict scenarios, Chinese forces would be expected at a minimum to conduct economy of force operations to keep Indian forces tied down on the eastern front in order to increase the chances of operational success in the west. Retired air force representatives particularly noted the challenges this would represent for India's air power. Whether or not these views reflect settled judgments of the Indian national security establishment, China's pursuit of its own civil nuclear deal with Pakistan in the year since the workshop has served to reinforce extreme notions in India about the intentions of Chinese support for Pakistan.

### *Internal Security Challenges Are a Core Concern*

These regional and border security issues notwithstanding, the workshop found that domestic security challenges still loom large for the Indian armed forces. Participants were quick to argue that India's homegrown insurgencies, along with cross-border challenges from Pakistan, were a significant inhibitor to focused discussion on India's potential role as an expeditionary military power. So many resources are necessarily committed to neutralizing and protecting against internal challenges that efforts to bolster forces for geographically distant contingencies are neutralized, participants argued.

As one scholar noted, there are "two Indias," in which the prosperity and rising status of one is held captive to the grinding poverty, inertial resistance, and violent reaction of the other. The three primary sources of internal security challenges can be traced to Islamist extremism and terrorism, left-wing (Maoist) insurgency, and ethnic fundamentalism and militancy. By the

end of 2008, 271 of India's 630 districts were afflicted by chronic conflict variables connected to these three root sources.

The scholar argued that state capacity to deal with internal security challenges is significantly hampered by two issues in particular. First, the division of responsibility for handling internal security rests with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) at the national level, while maintenance of public order and police functions rest with state governments. That division has created a system whereby both sides evade responsibility on the belief that the other side will take action, leading to widespread inefficiency and ineffectiveness during crisis response situations. The army is then often deployed to help maintain order in various crises, which not only keeps the army from focusing on other contingencies but also prevents any meaningful reform of state police forces.

"We have therefore to modernize our defence doctrines to respond to new and non-traditional threats to our national security."

—Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh,  
October 22, 2010, New Delhi

Despite these seemingly intractable internal security challenges, there was a sense that such challenges would not threaten India's overall growth trajectory and state cohesion. (However, subsequent to the workshop, India has seen further setbacks in management of the Maoist insurgency.) As if to prove the point, soon after the workshop, Indian voters provided a surprising and overwhelming stamp of approval on the Congress Party and its governing ability, marginalizing ethnically, religiously, and regionally based political parties.

### *Institutional Challenges to Indian Armed Forces Modernization Weaken Capacity*

*Structural defense reforms.* Workshop participants were nearly unanimous in criticism of the outmoded organizational structure and united in support of structural reforms that would replace India's current and ineffective effort at organizing joint operations with a new system that would make India's senior military officer a "chief of defense staff (CDS)." The participants argued that such a course of action would significantly help address the current deeply flawed processes of planning, budgeting, and resourcing, while also allowing for more integrated joint operational planning. Reflecting the timeliness of the initiative, the former chairman of the chiefs of staff committee, General (ret.) V.P. Malik, authored an editorial that appeared on the second day of the workshop in which he argued forcefully for such a change.

*Personnel recruitment and retention.* All of India's armed services face grave personnel recruitment and retention challenges, particularly at the junior officer level. According to one of the participants, the army alone has a current shortage of approximately 12,000 junior officers, which has adversely affected the development of cutting-edge junior leadership that is crucial to the success of small unit counterinsurgency operations. Most participants attributed these shortfalls to the wealth of opportunities afforded to educated young Indian professionals, and wondered if it is an enduring change in Indian society, part of India's new political economy, and thus a structural challenge that required innovative new policies.

Indeed, the challenge of recruiting top young talent cuts across the entire spectrum of India's defense community, from soldiers to India's defense industry. Although there are now over 50



research laboratories throughout the country, according to one Indian participant only 7% of the 7,000 researchers at India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) are PhD holders. One observer pointed out that this low number is attributable to the inability of the government labs to offer competitive salaries, which in turn indirectly bolsters the reputation of private labs conducting superior research. As a consequence, government R&D entities have had continuous difficulties in building on the military industrial base that India inherited from the British colonial government, leaving much to be desired in terms of indigenous weapons systems.

Recruiting, training, and retaining soldiers for India's armed forces and police entities has also proven challenging, particularly at the officer level. While today's army soldiers are better educated and more adaptive to high tech weapons systems than their fathers, one senior retired army officer noted, these soldiers are also more questioning of the logic behind the orders given to them and thus are more challenging to lead. Moreover, he noted that the officer shortage in the army's junior ranks lies mostly in the ranks of captain and major, the levels at which officers command infantry companies. This shortage has created a leadership vacuum among units engaged in unconventional conflict, including the counterinsurgency operations that occupy much of the army's time and resources.

As with personnel engaged in government defense R&D, many potential army officers are attracted by higher salaries in the private sector, particularly given the rigors and demands of army life. Further exacerbating the situation, many officers choose to retire after twenty years of service, having qualified for lifetime pensions, to pursue new careers with the potential for higher pay. The government is aware of the situation and has begun to search for measures that will increase the attractiveness of service to potential officers, including greater reliance on short service terms and an exit policy available at five-year intervals.

The Indian Navy may represent an exception to the trend of junior officer shortages, although the reasons were not comprehensively addressed at the workshop. One idea was that the Indian Navy's system of higher education has a reputation for producing well-prepared officers for staff and command positions, and the system of education is generally looked upon favorably by naval officers as a means to career advancement.

*Cold Start doctrine.* There was spirited debate in the workshop as to whether "Cold Start" is a defense doctrine or simply the means by which the Indian armed forces would mobilize in a military crisis, especially one with Pakistan; workshop participants eventually reached consensus that it is the latter. One retired senior officer's presentation provided an extended discussion of Cold Start. He argued that the purpose of Cold Start was to change the Indian Army's strategy from a defensive-reactive posture to one that leverages conventional Indian force superiority by seizing the initiative early in any confrontation. In practice, Cold Start would see the army launch a large number of battle groups for operations across the Pakistan border in a time frame meant not only to surprise Pakistan's forces but also to deny the international community a chance to stall or prevent Indian actions. One participant suggested that Cold Start might already be an accepted approach in the minds of military planners, but that the idea has not yet been accepted by the political class.

Perhaps reflecting the ambivalence of Indian political leaders, the unspoken question remained as to how such a mobilization plan comports with a scenario, mentioned above by the former senior Indian government official, in which Pakistan, taking a position to only lightly defend its border in order to devote more resources to Afghanistan, would face no military challenge from India.



In other words, if India harbors no intent to mobilize against Pakistan when Pakistani forces are committed to missions on its border with Afghanistan, what purpose is served by India's military following such a doctrine? Other participants argued that Cold Start invited strategic instability. Because it contradicts India's policy of massive retaliation and invites Pakistan to use nuclear weapons first if conventional defense fails, Cold Start could almost be regarded as preemptively destabilizing, as Islamabad could counter the build-up of India's conventional capabilities by expanding Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.

## Conclusion

As Obama visits India, the defense relationship is one of the many bright spots in the overall bilateral relationship. It is expected that the United States and India will continue to develop a strong bilateral defense relationship, albeit one that looks less like an alliance than a partnership based on shared goals. U.S. and Indian armed forces will operate together more frequently, and U.S. equipment will be purchased in larger quantities by India, in part reflecting the new strategic realities of Asia and a strengthened U.S.-Indian relationship.

As the United States and India continue to build their newly strengthened relationship, both partners face challenges in the process. In the realm of operational cooperation, greater steps toward embracing integration that would help check maritime adventurism by any other power inevitably will breed concerns about whether Indian foreign policy remains independent. Similarly, agreements to provide advanced U.S. military equipment also require agreement to U.S. rules and practices on the use of such equipment that test Indian proprieties and will complicate India's ties with other suppliers of military equipment, including Russian and European companies. Looming over these bilateral security issues are the differentiated security challenges each country faces in managing complex security relationships with Pakistan and China. Certainly, however, bilateral cooperation on the internal challenges the Indian Armed Forces face—structural reform, domestic counterinsurgency, personnel acquisition and management reform, among others—provides opportunities that might mitigate some of the other challenges as well as help to build longer-term collaborations that will be in both countries' interests.



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*Seattle and Washington, D.C.*

1414 NE 42ND STREET, SUITE 300  
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PHONE 206-632-7370, FAX 206-632-7487

1301 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, SUITE 305  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004 USA  
PHONE 202-347-9767, FAX 202-347-9766

[NBR@NBR.ORG](mailto:NBR@NBR.ORG), [WWW.NBR.ORG](http://WWW.NBR.ORG)