

India and America: A New Special Relationship?

**An Analysis of the Future Alliance Between The
United States and India**

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Introduction

Alliances between the United States and other countries are created based on the needs and crisis of the eras in which they are formed. The Cold War, specifically the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, shaped the Pakistani-American relationship while the South Korean-American bond was formed after the Korean War in order to prevent another North Korean attack. However, there are certain alliances that are classified as special relationships. These are bonds that America shares with other countries that go beyond the basic diplomatic, economic, military, and cultural cooperation that usually classify standard relations between allies. America has greatly benefited from this type of cooperation with countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom, authorizing some of the most lucrative economic treaties and executing some of the most successful military operations of our time.

Despite the strong connections between America and its allies, as well as its special relationships with the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia, there are new threats that are challenging the United States' interests. China is quickly rising and is on pace to become a global superpower while the war and terrorism in Afghanistan rage on with no end in sight. Under the current landscape of American alliances, the United States is ill-equipped to handle these rapidly deteriorating situations. However, there is one nation that can help America with these challenges while also bringing great economic and cultural gains to the country as well: India. While the United States currently has a strong relationship with India, there are many aspects of the relationship that remain unexplored or that can be greatly improved upon. So much so, that in fact, based on its critical geographic location, growing economy, and powerful military, the

American government must increase its ties with India to that of a special relationship, creating a reliable and powerful ally that can help the United States fully grapple with the new world order.

This paper will seek to demonstrate why it is worthwhile for the United States to pursue a special relationship with India, as opposed to keeping relations the same as they currently stand. It will begin by defining what exactly a special relationship is and what it entails by using the current United Kingdom-United States relationship as a case study. It will then look at the current state of the Indian-America relationship while also examining the possible pitfalls of pursuing such an alliance. The paper will then look at India's geographic, military, economic, power and potential, as well as a few other benefits, to show why such a union is in the best interests of the United States.

The Special Relationship Between The United Kingdom and The United States: A Case Study

Before looking at what a special relationship between India and the United States would like, it is important to understand what a general special relationship looks like. In general, when referring to a special relationship, experts agree that it usually entails higher levels trust between the two countries that leads to greater economic and military cooperation.¹ For this, there is no greater example than the United Kingdom-United States alliance. Although the United States and the United Kingdom have been strong allies since the late 19th century and the Great Rapprochement,² the Special Relationship was not formed until World War Two. The term "Special Relationship" was not actually used until March 5, 1946 in a speech given by Winston

¹ Harnisch, Sebastian. "Special Relationships in Foreign Policy." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, <http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-486>. Accessed 12 Dec 2017.

² Perkins, Bradford. *The Great Rapprochement*. Scribner, 1968

Churchill at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri,³ but historians argue that it actually began in June 1939 with FDR's invitation to the King and Queen of England to visit Washington, the first time a reigning monarch would visit the United States. After the outbreak of World War Two, the fall of France, and the British victory in the Battle of Britain, the American government started dealing very closely with the British government, forming the the Combined Chiefs of Staff , drafting the Atlantic Charter,⁴ and sending the UK the most amount of money when implementing the Marshall Plan.⁵ Both the Combined Chiefs of Staff and level of aid given over to the United Kingdom were unprecedented, thus cementing the beginning of the Special Relationship.⁶

Following World War Two, the Special relationship continued to flourish on a military level as the UK became America's most reliable military partner. The United Kingdom assisted with the Manhattan Project under the Quebec Agreement. They also contributed the most soldiers to the Korean War outside of the United States and the Republic of Korea⁷, allowed the US Air Force to launch airstrikes from British bases against Libya in 1986, provided support to the United States during the Gulf War and Kosovo War, and was the only major European power

³ Churchill, Winston, "The Sinews of Peace ('Iron Curtain Speech')." 5 March, 1946, Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri. <https://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace/>

⁴Woolner, David. "The 'Special Relationship' between Great Britain and the United States Began with FDR." Roosevelt Institute, <http://rooseveltinstitute.org/special-relationship-between-great-britain-and-united-states-began-fdr/>. Accessed 10 Dec 2017.

⁵ United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs. *The Marshall Plan: Origins and Implementation*. http://marshallfoundation.org/library/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2014/05/The_Marshall_Plan_Origins_and_Implementation_000.pdf. 1982

⁶ Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Anglo-American Chain of Command in Western Europe, June 1944." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglo-American-Chain-of-Command-in-Western-Europe-June-1944-1673115#ref830381>. Accessed 10 Dec 2017.

⁷ United States Forces Korea. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160711030514/http://www.usfk.mil/About/United-Nations-Command/>. Accessed 10 Dec 2017.

to provide support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The United States and the United Kingdom also collaborated during the Cold War, with the British allowing the United States to operate several military bases on British soil, and the formation of the UK-USA Security Agreement of 1948, an intelligence sharing organization that still exists to this day.⁸

Economically, the United States and the United Kingdom have greatly benefited from the Special Relationship. The United States is the United Kingdom's largest trading partner, with trade between the two countries reaching more than \$200 billion in 2014.⁹ In 2013, United States foreign direct investment in the UK was \$571 billion while total U.S. corporate assets in the United Kingdom stood at nearly \$5 trillion in 2013, representing 22% of total U.S. corporate assets abroad.¹⁰ Furthermore, the United Kingdom business affiliates employ nearly 1 million American workers. The low tax rate, the fact that many major companies such as Google and Microsoft have their European headquarters in the United Kingdom,¹¹ and the shared positive view on free trade between the two countries¹² all make the United Kingdom a very friendly business environment for American business and help sustain the Special Relationship.

Despite the unmatched military and economic support between the two countries, the most important aspect that makes this relationship “special” is that even in times of extreme and harsh disagreement, the two nations were able to put the controversy behind them and continue

⁸ Mix, Derek E. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Project. *The United Kingdom: Background and Relations with the United States*. 2015. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33105.pdf>

⁹ Kottasova, Ivana. “U.S. and UK: Best business buddies?” *CNN*, 1 May. 2015, <http://money.cnn.com/2015/05/01/news/economy/uk-election-us-special-relationship/index.html>. Accessed 10 Dec 2017.

¹⁰ Mix, 2015

¹¹ Kottasova, 2015

¹² Mix, 2015

to support each other. The Yom Kippur War, Vietnam War, and, most notably, the Suez Crisis all sparked major falling outs between the United States and the United Kingdom, yet the two never let that put an end to their relationship, making it truly special and unprecedented. This is due to the fact that the two countries share a common political philosophy of individual freedom, a law based state, and law based on tradition, experience, and precedent.¹³ This shared ideology, along with unprecedented military cooperation and economic activity, is what makes an international relationship special.

Current State of Indian-America Relations

While the United States and India currently have a strong and positive relationship, it is nowhere near the level of the US-UK Special Relationship. Before the Bush administration, the United States had minimal military interactions with India. India was a non-aligned power during the Cold War and thus America did not have a high opinion of the southeast Asian nation.¹⁴ However, ties between the two have blossomed ever since. The two countries have signed two 10 year Frameworks for the U.S.-India defense relationship, one in 2005 and one in 2015, which allowed for more cooperation between the two militaries, including a joint aircraft carrier exercise in the Bay of Bengal. The two countries have also conducted several joint army and naval exercises, including the famous Malabar naval exercise.¹⁵ India is now considered a “Major Defense Partner” by the United States government, giving it access to a wide range of dual-use technologies” at “a level commensurate with that of [the United States] closest allies

¹³Bankcroft, Jerrod V. *U.S.-UK Relations at the Start of the 21st Century*. Nova Science Publishers, 2009.

¹⁴ Rubinoff, Arthur G. “The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-India Relations.” *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Pages 169-187.

¹⁵ Jain, B.M. “Upward Graph in Strategic Ties Between India and the United States: Implications for Asian Security Architecture.” *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 1/2, 2016, Pages 1-16.

and partners.¹⁶ However, America has also been reluctant to allow India access to advanced military technology on a consistent basis out of fear that Indian firms will begin producing the military equipment themselves and hurt American weapon companies.¹⁷ India also did not assist in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, has been unable to play as large a role as America wished in the Afghanistan conflict, and has refused to conduct freedom of navigation missions in the South China Sea.¹⁸

The Indian and American have also greatly increased their nuclear cooperation. India's nuclear weapons had been a major thorn in the relationship between the two countries, leading to nearly 30 years of U.S. imposed sanctions after India tested their first nuclear weapon in 1974.¹⁹ However, things have drastically changed since the Bush administration signed a civil nuclear agreement with the Indian government. It implicitly recognized India as a nuclear power and granted India the same benefits as any other NPT signatory, even though India never signed that treaty.²⁰ In 2010 India established the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership to deal with

¹⁶ Panda, Ankit. "US Implementation of 'Major Defense Partner' Perks for India Underway." *The Diplomat*, 14 April. 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/04/us-implementation-of-major-defense-partner-perks-for-india-underway/>. Accessed 9 Nov 2017.

¹⁷ "Big Ticket US-India Defense Deals Unlikely While US Guards Tech Secrets." *Sputnik International*, 22 September. 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/military/201709221057624622-us-india-defense-deals-secrets/>. Accessed 9 Nov 2017.

¹⁸ Pasricha, Anjana. "India Rejects Joint Naval Patrols with US in South China Sea." *VOA News*, 11 March 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/a/india-rejects-joint-naval-patrols-with-us-in-south-china-sea/3231567.html>. Accessed 9 Nov 2017.

¹⁹ FP Staff. "India-US nuclear deal: All you need to know about the landmark agreement." *FirstPost*, 13 June. 2017, <http://www.firstpost.com/india/india-us-nuclear-deal-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-landmark-agreement-3596209.html>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

²⁰ *ibid*

nuclear security across the world and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States to work together on nuclear security.²¹

While India and America also enjoy positive and growing economic relations, they can only be categorized as adequate at best. Trade between the two countries has reached \$115 billion²² and the United States is India's top trading partner in terms of exports, importing over \$42 billion worth of imports a year.²³ However, compared to trade relations between the United States and countries such as South Korea and China, there is much room for improvement. Trading between South Korea and America is double of what it is with India despite the fact that South Korea's GDP is 40% smaller than India's.²⁴ Still, trade is only expected to continue to increase as major corporations such as Microsoft, Dell, and IBM have made multi-billion dollar investments in India and Boeing expects that India will spend over \$150 billion on new airplanes in the next 20 years. Indian investment in the United States has reached over \$4.4 billion as well and, with the rise of the Indian middle class, it is expected that exports from America will dramatically rise.²⁵ However, the United States still does not have access to select Indian markets, does not trust India when it comes to trading nuclear dual-use technology, and is pushing for stronger intellectual property rights in the country.

²¹ Kerr, Paul K., K. Alan Kronstadt, Michael F. Martin, and Bruce Vaughn. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service. *India: Domestic Issues, Strategic Dynamics, and U.S. Relations*. 2011. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33529.pdf>.

²² Meltzer, Joshua P., and Harsha Vardhana Singh. "Growing the U.S.-India economic relationship: The only way forward." *Brookings*, 22 June. 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/06/22/growing-the-u-s-india-economic-relationship-the-only-way-forward/>. Accessed November 7 2017.

²³ Workman, Daniel. "India's Top Trading Partners." *World's Top Exports*, 22 September. 2017, <http://www.worldstopexports.com/indias-top-import-partners/>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

²⁴Meltzer, 2017

²⁵ Kerr, 2011

Arguments Against

Much ink has been spilled in newspapers, academic journals, and magazines arguing that a special relationship between the two countries would be in the United States best interests.^{26 27}

²⁸ However, there are also compelling and reasonable objections that must be noted. The first being the delicate security relationship with China and how an increase in America-Indian relations would affect that. China is a rising superpower and the current regional power in Asia. Tensions are already high between India and China due to India's nuclear program²⁹ and their territorial disputes over the Aksai Chin area. China is also wary of India's role in Tibet since India has been the sanctuary for the Dalai Lama.³⁰ At the same time, tensions between the United States and China are also rising due to China's aggressive island building in the South China Sea, China and America's differing views on North Korea, and the inevitable tensions that arise when one power is trying to overshadow the other. There is a fear that seeking stronger relations with India will only increase this tension between all three countries, making it more difficult for the United States to find resolutions regarding the South China Sea and North Korea, while also making an armed conflict between India and China more likely. Economically, the United States also cannot afford to upset China. China is America's largest trading partner, making up 17.6%

²⁶ Feigenbaum, Evan A. "India's Rise, America's Interest: The Fate of the U.S.-Indian Partnership." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 2, 2010, Pages 76-91.

²⁷ Anand, Manpreet Singh. "3 Areas of Opportunity for the US-India Relationship." *The Diplomat*, 02 March. 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/3-areas-of-opportunity-for-the-us-india-relationship/>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

²⁸ Burns, Nicholas. "India's strategic importance to the US." *The Boston Globe*, 3 February. 2012, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/02/03/india-strategic-importance/Gel26HCIZGLUuWCw11XHaN/story.html>. Accessed November 9 2017.

²⁹ Jain, 2016

³⁰ Kerr, 2011

of American trade.³¹ If America were to upset China by getting too close to India, it could threaten this economic relationship, throwing the economy into a tailspin.

On a security level, the same logic applies to the America-Pakistani relationship. Pakistan and India are mortal enemies. The two countries have fought four official wars against each other and are still engaged in the conflict over the Jammu and Kashmir region. At the same time, America relies on Pakistan for counterterrorism intelligence and assistance in the war in Afghanistan. Creating a special relationship would certainly upset these forms of cooperation and drive the Pakistanis straight into the arms of China as they too would feel that they need a special relationship with a superpower to keep up with their Indian enemies.

Another issue is Iranian-Indian relations. Ever since the end of the Cold War and the rise of the United States as the dominant superpower, Iran and India have formed close ties. India's growing population and energy demands make Iran, a country with vast energy resources, an ideal trading partner. Currently, India is buying much of Iran's crude oil supply, but, even when Iran was under sanctions, India found ways to legally buy the small amount of oil Iran was producing.³² India's large Shia population has also affected how India interacts with Iran.³³ This was made clear when India was very reluctant to vote against Iran in the IAEA in 2005, only to have Stephen G. Rademaker, the former Assistant Secretary for Non-Proliferation and International Security at the US State Department, claim that India's vote was coerced by the

³¹ "Top Trading Partners - October 2017." *United States Census Bureau*, October. 2017. <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/top/top1710cm.html>. Accessed 11 December 2017.

³² Riley, Charles. "India and Iran renew oil bromance in post-sanctions world." *CNN Money*, 15 April. 2016, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/04/15/news/economy/india-iran-crude-oil/index.html>. Accessed 6 November 2017.

³³ Pant, Harsh V. "India and US-Iran Imbroglio: Difficult Choices Ahead." *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Pages 23-38. 2006

United States and that they were not very pleased about it, a claim disputed by the American government.³⁴ Finally, India also has several infrastructure projects with Iran, including the Chabahar port and railway projects.³⁵

The United States views Iran as a hostile country and a state sponsor of terrorism. Although President Barak Obama signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, he was clear that this was only about their nuclear program and that Iran was still a menace when it came to terrorism and ballistic missile testing. Under President Donald Trump, the United States has decertified the JCPOA and multiple members of the administration and Congress have called for the dismantling of the deal and the reimposition of sanctions. If the United States wants to form a closer relationship with India, this tension about Iran will have to be resolved as neither the United States or India will be able to ignore the other's relationship with Iran.

It is not just foreign policy issues that could impede on this relationship. There are also several domestic issues that could make the relationship difficult. Part of the reason the America-British Special Relationship works so well is because the countries share the same values such as freedom of the press, the importance of law, and a love for democracy. This is some concern that India may not share one of the core values that defines American society: freedom of religion.

The concern over freedom of religion is displayed in the tension between the Hindu and Muslim populations. While freedom of religion is listed in India's constitution, there are

³⁴ Special Correspondent. "Rademaker is not a U.S. official." *The Hindu*. 27 September. 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/%60Rademaker-is-not-a-U.S.-official/article14721762.ece>. Accessed 12 December 2017.

³⁵ Akhtar, Shayerah Ilias, and K. Alan Kronstadt. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service. *India-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*. 2017. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44876.pdf>.

concerns that India does not take this right seriously. In 2017 there were a series of attacks on Indian cattle traders, beef eaters, and dairy farmers—most of whom happen to be Muslim^{36 37}—conducted by Hindu “cow vigilantes³⁸” who claim to be protecting cows, a sacred animal in the Hindu religion, that left five dead. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the attacks and called for them to stop, his party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (translated to India People’s Party), have rarely spoken out about these attacks.³⁹ This view was only strengthened in May 2017, when Modi’s government banned the sale of cattle for slaughter, saying it could only be sold for agricultural purposes. To make matters worse, according to a 2017 Pew research study, in 2015, India was ranked the fourth highest country in regards to having “very high social hostilities involving religion.⁴⁰” This report is very discouraging for a country that claims to be a democracy, and where 14% of its 1.3 billion people population is Muslim.⁴¹

There are also other Indian human rights violations that should concern the Indian-American relationship. In India, it is very hard to prosecute government officials. Courts are not allowed to recognize any offenses (except sexual offenses) committed by public servants in the

³⁶ Associated Press in New Delhi. “Modi condemns rise in mob violence against beef-eaters in India.” *The Guardian*, 29 June. 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/29/modi-condemns-rise-mob-violence-beef-eaters-india>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

³⁷ Reuters. “India’s Supreme Court Suspends Ban on Sale of Cows for Slaughter.” *The New York Times*, 11 July. 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/11/world/asia/india-cows-slaughter-beef-leather-hindu-supreme-court-ban.html?mtrref=undefined>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

³⁸ Associated Press in New Delhi, 2017

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ Kishi, Katayoun. “Global Restrictions on Religion Rise Modestly in 2015, Reversing Downward Trend.” *Pew Research Center*. 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/11/global-restrictions-on-religion-rise-modestly-in-2015-reversing-downward-trend/>

⁴¹ Reuters, 2017

discharge of their official duties unless the central or a state government permits prosecution.⁴² A 2016 Supreme Court decision to uphold criminal defamation laws that allowed for the prosecution of those who speak out against the government also raised some concerns.⁴³ If America becomes closer with India without holding them to higher standards, they could end up facing off with human rights activists and groups concerned with such an alliance.

There is also the question of whether India would want such a relationship. Forging this type of bond with the United States would most likely require India to make concessions to the United States in the areas of global security and trade. India has always been concerned that America will look the other way to Pakistani terrorism in India in exchange for cooperation in combatting terrorism aimed at America. India believes, for example, that America was uncooperative during the 2008 Mumbai bombing.⁴⁴ The demanding of political concessions to Pakistan from India in order to create stability in Afghanistan also raises questions from the Indian side.⁴⁵ Something will have to give—either America toning down their relationship with Pakistan or India accepting an American-Pakistani alliance—for this relationship to work.

India must also worry about their relationship with the Chinese. Aside from their territorial disputes that were covered earlier, there have been reports linking Chinese intelligence

⁴² Katayoun, 2015

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade. *Hearing on U.S.-India Counterterrorism Cooperation: Deepening the Partnership*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011, 112 Congress, First Session, Serial No. 112-62. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-112hhrg68297/pdf/CHRG-112hhrg68297.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Kerr, 2011

operatives to insurgent groups in India's northeast.⁴⁶ If India becomes too close to the United States, they could see a growth in Chinese activity in the northeast part of the country.

Economically, India is heavily linked to China through trade. While America is India's leading trade partner in exports, China currently holds the title for India's leading trade partner in imports and in general,⁴⁷ accounting for \$70 billion of trade.⁴⁸ As stated above, China is a rising superpower and the leading regional power in Asia. They are natural rivals with the United States and would see a special relationship between the United States and India as a possible threat to their regional sovereignty. By becoming closer with the United States, India could be jeopardizing their trade relationship with China as well as their national security. Due to this complicated Indian-Chinese relationship, American officials could find some resistance to a stronger relationship in India.

The New Special Relationship: Geographic Benefits

While there are many concerns about increasing the ties between the United States and India, the benefits and advantages far exceed the potential disadvantages and harm it may cause. Before looking at those benefits, however, it is important to understand India's vital geographical position and how it would play into this new special relationship. India's geography is so important that, according to the strategist Robert Kaplan, "the direction in which India tilts could determine the course of geopolitics in Eurasia"⁴⁹ for the next century.

⁴⁶ Morris, Lyle. "Is China Backing Indian Insurgents?" *The Diplomat*, 22 March. 2011, <https://thediplomat.com/2011/03/is-china-backing-indian-insurgents/>. Accessed 6 November 2017.

⁴⁷Kerr, 2011

⁴⁸ Varma, K J M. "India's trade deficit with China mounts to \$46.56 billion." *livemint*, 13 January. 2017, <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/Ag4wtkZODwjHtESc117WO/Indias-trade-deficit-with-China-mounts-to-4656-billion.html>. Accessed 6 November 2017.

⁴⁹ Kaplan, Robert D. *The Revenge of Geography*. Random House, 2012

While India has many geographical advantages, many agree that the greatest advantage India has is their close proximity to the Indian Ocean. It is at the crossroads of the global trading network, connecting Northern Atlantic trade to that of the Asian Pacific⁵⁰. It allows easy access to the Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea, and the Gulf of Oman.⁵¹ It also contains the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca the Bab el-Mandab Strait.⁵² The access the ocean provides makes it very attractive for trading and transporting goods. Every year, 90,000 vessels carry 9.84 billion tonnes through the ocean.⁵³ Included in those 9.84 billion tonnes are 36 million barrels of oil, 40% of the world's oil supply and 64% of the world's oil trade.⁵⁴ The continuous growth of the Indian economy⁵⁵ and population will lead to more economic opportunities⁵⁶, increasing trade in the Indian Ocean and making it an even more vital economic asset to those with privileged access.

Aside from its trading and economic benefits, the Indian Ocean also provides an abundance of natural resources. 40% of the offshore oil production takes place in the Indian Ocean.⁵⁷ Fishing in the Indian Ocean has skyrocketed in the last 60 years, increasing 13 fold and

⁵⁰ Jaishankar, Dhruva. "Indian Ocean region: A pivot for India's growth." *Brookings*, 12 September. 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/indian-ocean-region-a-pivot-for-indias-growth/>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

⁵¹ Kaplan, 2012

⁵² DeSilva-Ranasinghe, Sergei. "Why the Indian Ocean Matters." *The Diplomat*, 2 March. 2011, <https://thediplomat.com/2011/03/why-the-indian-ocean-matters/>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

⁵³ Dhruva, 2016

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ Ghosh, Mohul. "India To Overtake Japan, UK, Germany To Become World's 3rd Biggest Economy By 2050: The Economist Intelligence Unit." *Trak.in*, 24 May. 2017, <http://trak.in/tags/business/2015/06/26/india-economic-growth-2014-2050-top-3/>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

⁵⁶ Dhruva, 2016

⁵⁷ *ibid*

accounting for 15% of the world's fishing production.⁵⁸ Furthermore, even though global fishing has reached its natural limits, the India Ocean can sustain an increase in production, making it all the more important to the world's fishing market.⁵⁹ The Indian Ocean also contain sizable amounts of manganese, copper, iron, zinc, silver, and gold as well as many other minerals.⁶⁰

India currently has no strategic rivals in the Indian Ocean.⁶¹ It is not like the South China Sea where several countries claim different areas of the sea. This has allowed India to operate in the India Ocean peacefully without any major distractions. Finally, Robert Kaplan has predicted that the Indian Ocean will replace the Mediterranean as the central arena of global energy flow, container traffic, and politics in this century.⁶²

A new special relationship with India would allow the United States to reap the benefits of the Indian Ocean. One of the largest issues for the United States currently is the crisis in the South China Sea. The United States is afraid that China is consolidating its power over the sea, which would give them the ability to threaten freedom of navigation and the sea trade. If the Indian Ocean is set to become the central area of global energy flow, the United States must ensure that a South China Sea-like crisis does not occur there as well. The United States cannot afford to have China come into the Indian Ocean and threaten freedom of navigation there as well. China has built a series of military bases along the coast of the Indian Ocean, trying to

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ *ibid*

⁶¹ DeSilva-Ranasinghe, 2011

⁶² Burns, 2012

make up for the great distance between it and the ocean itself,⁶³ and has positioned some of their Jin class submarines at Sanya, their closest access point to the Indian Ocean.⁶⁴ From these actions, it is clear that China has plans for the Indian Ocean. Therefore, it is imperative for the United States to create a strong naval presence in the Indian Ocean. However, to counter a rising superpower like China, the United States will have to rely on other powers to assist them. Forming a special relationship with India would allow the two to collaborate in the Indian Ocean and ensure that both nations trade interests are protected from a rising China.

India's position on land is also vital to American interests. It is located in the center of the rapidly changing geopolitical sphere, with China, South Korea, and Japan to the East, and the Middle East to the West. With China rising and the Middle East looking like it will remain a mess for decades to come, it is important for America to have a reliable and powerful ally in the region. Just as the United States needed the United Kingdom, a country close in proximity to Germany, to confront the Nazi's, they need an ally in the region to be able to confront China and their Middle Eastern enemies. India is the only country that fits the description, making them vital to American national security. While not a certainty, a new special relationship could lead to new military bases in India, if not increase the chances of them opening Those bases would easily be able to reach the South China Sea and the Middle East, providing America with an easy and convenient launching pad for their operations. India's close proximity to Afghanistan also increases its geographical benefits to the United States. China and Pakistan cannot be trusted,

⁶³ Pant, Harsh V. "India in the Indian Ocean: Growing Mismatch between Ambitions and Capabilities." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 82. No. 2, Pages 279-297.

⁶⁴ *ibid*

leaving India as the natural choice to help in the war. India is very close to Afghanistan making it logistically easy to transport troops, supplies, and resource to the devastated country.

Military Benefits

In today's current geopolitical landscape, it happens to be that the two countries challenging American supremacy are located in Asia. Both Russia and China are challenging the United States' role as the global superpower, and while Russia seems more focused on Europe at the moment, China has their focus locked in on Asia. There is a great worry that China is trying to push America out of Asia at a time where Asia is experiencing unprecedented economic growth, technological advancements, and growing strategic importance. Using its "New Silk Road" initiative, a growing number of trade deals that include ports and railroad lines that would link China to countries all over the world, China is seeking to upend American influence. The building of ports and the selling of submarines to countries like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh⁶⁵ and a multibillion-dollar infrastructure project are just some of the deals that China has inked using this new strategy.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Chinese activity in the South China Sea, the building of Chinese military base in Djibouti,⁶⁷ a 7% increase in the military budget for 2017,⁶⁸ and the building of a second aircraft carrier⁶⁹ all indicate an unprecedented Chinese military buildup.

⁶⁵ Akhtar, 2017

⁶⁶ Huang, Kristin, and Sarah Zheng. "Multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan project will benefit entire region, Pakistani envoy says." *South China Morning Post*, 6 November. 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2118537/pakistani-envoy-plays-regional-gains-silk-road-mega>. Accessed November 9 2017.

⁶⁷ Baldor, Lolita C., "Pentagon Report Cites China Military Buildup Around World." *U.S. News*, 6 June.2017, <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2017-06-06/pentagon-report-cites-china-military-build-up-around-world>. Accessed 6 November 2017.

⁶⁸ "China to increase military spending by 7% in 2017." *BBC*, 4 March. 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-39165080>. Accessed 6 November 2017.

⁶⁹ Rojanasakul, Mira, and David Tweed. "The Great Asian Arms Buildup." *Bloomberg*, 31 May. 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2016-shangrila/>. Accessed November 9 2017.

A new special relationship with India could help counter this new Chinese military buildup. Indian and American interest align when it comes to China. India is also concerned with China's military buildup, especially their growing ties with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh,⁷⁰ relationships that could threaten India's control over the India Ocean. The Indian government does not want to see China bully its way to the top of Asia while they get left behind.⁷¹

These shared interests are not the only aspects that make India an attractive military partner against China. Along with China, India has also been increasing their military power. They have overtaken Saudi Arabi and Russia as the fourth largest spenders on their military.⁷² They have deals in motion in which they will be purchasing 6 Kalvari submarines, 5 S400 Air-defense missile systems, 8 Shivalik-class destroyers, 4 Kolkata-II-class destroyers, 3 Aircraft carriers, and close to 90 fighter jets.⁷³ India is also a nuclear state and has the third strongest army, right behind the United States and China who are ranked first and second, respectively.⁷⁴ While they may not compare with American and Chinese spending limits, India is clearly a formidable military power that America would greatly benefit from having as an ally.

With this large Indian military buildup, India could also help the United States with its longest war: Afghanistan. Despite the announcement that more American troops will be going into Afghanistan, it is no secret that the American people and military is getting tired of this

⁷⁰ Kerr, 2011

⁷¹ Kerr, 2011

⁷² Yoon, Sangwon. "How Much The World Is Spending On Military: India Is Number 4." *NDTV*, 14 december. 2016, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/how-much-the-world-is-spending-on-military-india-is-number-4-1637643>. Accessed 7 November 2017.

⁷³ Rojanasakul, 2016

⁷⁴Express Web Desk. "What is India's military strength?" *The India Express*, 16 July. 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/what-is/what-is-indias-military-strength-4748511/>. Accessed 7 November 2017.

conflict.⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ There is no end in sight as, after 16 years of fighting, the Taliban are still in control of most of the areas they started with.⁷⁷ The United States needs a local power to help them solve this problem and, since Pakistan has been little to no help,⁷⁸ India is the next best option. A new special relationship that leads to broad and effective military cooperation in Afghanistan -similar to that between the UK and the United States in Iraq- could help turn the tide. India troops could help with the burden of maintaining and training Afghani security forces and India's local location would also give the United States a new intelligence opening. India already has a lot at stake in Afghanistan and has the trust of the Afghan government.⁷⁹ Most importantly, they see a stable Afghanistan as a reliable counter to Pakistan when it comes to Islamic militancy, and wish to use Afghanistan as a way to bypass Pakistan when it comes to engaging with Western and Central Asia.⁸⁰ They have wanted to take a greater role in the conflict but have been unable to due to the fear that Pakistan would react violently.⁸¹ A special relationship with America could put those fears to bed, allowing each country to get what they want.

⁷⁵ Frostenson, Sarah, and Jeremy C.F. Lin. "Trump will increase troops in Afghanistan. Here's how U.S. troop levels have changed since 2001." *Politico*, 21 August. 2017, <https://www.politico.com/interactives/2017/timeline-troops-afghanistan-trump/>. Accessed 12 December 2017

⁷⁶ Shepard, Steve. "Trump's challenge: A wall of public skepticism on Afghanistan War." *Politico*, 21 August. 2017, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/08/21/trump-afghanistan-war-troops-241871>. Accessed 12 December 2017.

⁷⁷ Almukhtar, Sarah. "How Much of Afghanistan Is Under Taliban Control After 16 Years of War With the U.S.?" *The New York Times*, 23 August. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/23/world/asia/afghanistan-us-taliban-isis-control.html>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

⁷⁸ Kugelman, Michael. "The U.S.-Pakistan Relationship Is on Life Support." *National Interest*, 4 September. 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-us-pakistan-relationship-life-support-22149>. Accessed 7 November 2017.

⁷⁹ Kerr, 2011

⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁸¹ *ibid*

Another aspect of the special relationship is intelligence sharing. The United States has concerns regarding terrorism in the region. Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and the LeT are all active Southeast Asia and have carried out attacks that have killed hundreds of people. Furthermore, the United States cannot afford to be worried about Southeast Asian terrorism when China is rising and the war in Afghanistan rages on. The region is unstable enough as is. Further conflict would only make things much worse. While intelligence sharing has increased between the two countries since 2008, a new special relationship would remove the remaining bureaucratic restrictions,⁸² ensuring that the region does not delve into chaos.

As stated above, this increase in military and security cooperation could threaten American relations with Pakistan. However, over the last few years, the relationship between Pakistan and the United States has become strained. The United States does not fully trust Pakistan and believes that they act as a shelter for terrorists that destabilize Afghanistan and attack American troops.⁸³ 92% of the Pakistani population disapproves of U.S. leadership and there is a general feeling of mistrust on both sides.⁸⁴ Pakistan is also becoming especially close to China, a move that many in the United States are concerned about. It is time for the United States to seek a new primary ally in Southeast Asia, and aligning with India is the best course of action to take. This would give India the political cover to get more involved in Afghanistan, a great benefit to both America and India. Furthermore, America would not fear losing their

⁸²Hearing on U.S.-India Counterterrorism Cooperation: Deepening the Partnership, 2011

⁸³ Kugelman, 2017

⁸⁴ ibid

footprint in Southeast Asia as India would simply replace Pakistan as their primary ally in the region.

Economic Benefits

The economic benefits of a special relationship with India would also greatly benefit the United States. As stated above, India is in the midst of a massive military buildup. They are projected to spend \$100 billion over the next decade in new military equipment.⁸⁵ The two nations have signed \$11 billion worth of contract since 2008, and, in November of 2016, India signed a \$737 million contract to purchase 145 M777A2 ultralight howitzers that would be built primarily by a Mississippi-based subsidiary of Briton's BAE systems. A new special relationship could lead to more deals like this being signed while avoiding missed opportunities such as the 2011 fighter jet contract that America did not win,⁸⁶ creating new jobs and capital in the United States.⁸⁷

India's own economy is also growing in strength. Currently, the United States is heavily tied to the Chinese economy as they are their leading trading partner.⁸⁸ However, as the American-Chinese relationship continues to be shrouded in doubt and suspicion, the United States should be looking for ways to be less reliant on China. India would be an excellent substitution. Between 2005 and 2008 the economy of India grew 9% per year and in 2016 it grew

⁸⁵ Rojanasakul, 2016

⁸⁶ Kerr, 2011

⁸⁷ Akhtar, 2017

⁸⁸ United States Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Economic Indicators Division. *Top U.S. Trade Partners*. https://www.trade.gov/mas/ian/build/groups/public/@tg_ian/documents/webcontent/tg_ian_003364.pdf. 2016.

7.6%.⁸⁹ Their GDP passed the 2 trillion mark in 2016 and they are set to become the second largest economy in the world by 2050.⁹⁰ India is also heavily linked to China in trade as they are also India's leading trading partner. If both countries conducted more trade with each other, they would be less reliant on China and not have to worry about Chinese retaliation in the economic or security sphere.

Although there are fears that India's bureaucracy and economic policy are too corrupt and difficult to navigate, recent economic policies have liberalized the government and have led to this unprecedented amount to occur, including the finalization of a goods and service tax and creating a single market for the populations of the United States, Japan, Europe, Brazil, and Mexico, and new bankruptcy laws.⁹¹⁹² In fact, it should be taken as a good sign that India has been able to grow so quickly over the last few years with so much corruption and bureaucracy.⁹³ Furthermore, all signs point to even more policies that will open up the economy being implemented, allowing for even more economic growth.

India's infrastructure has also been a concern for the United States economic policy. There are fears that India does not have the capabilities to handle their economic prosperity or the trade deals that will inevitably follow.⁹⁴ However, just like India's economic policy, the

⁸⁹ Rao, Aprameya, and Kishor Kadam. "25 Years of Liberalization: A Glimpse of India's Growth in 14 Charts." *Firstpost*. 07 July. 2017, <http://www.firstpost.com/business/25-years-of-liberalisation-a-glimpse-of-indias-growth-in-14-charts-2877654.html>

⁹⁰ *ibid*

⁹¹ *ibid*

⁹² Akhtar, 2017

⁹³ Kerr, 2011

⁹⁴ *ibid*

situation is improving. The government of India as well as the governments of various other states -Spain, Singapore, the United States- have all heavily invested in the infrastructure of India with the hopes of improving their economy.⁹⁵ The lack of infrastructure may even benefit the United States in the short run, as they may be more inclined to award contracts to American companies if they had the proper relationship with the United States.

India also has the second largest population of any country. This is a massive market that is relatively untouched due to the high levels of poverty in India society.⁹⁶ However, India's middle class is expected to double by 2025, opening up a brand new market for businesses around the world. While India has been reluctant to open up their markets, under a new special relationship, India may be more willing to open up them to American business. In return, the United States could increase the number of India workers that are allowed to provide services in America under the H1-B visa program, and give India more time to reach the WTO economic liberalization standards⁹⁷ The United States could also lift restriction on trading dual use nuclear technology with India, something they have been pushing for years.⁹⁸ Both countries are at a point where each one has something the other wants economically, and they would both benefit greatly from reaching a compromise that addressed all their concerns.

⁹⁵ "Infrastructure Sector in India." *IBEF*, November. 2017, <https://www.ibef.org/industry/infrastructure-sector-india.aspx>. Accessed 6 November 2017.

⁹⁶ Kerr, 2011

⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁹⁸ *ibid*

Iran, Human Rights, and Other Concerns

As mentioned above, there is concern that Indian-Iranian relations would make this new special relationship difficult. However, over the last ten years, India has been very accepting of America's harsher approach towards Iran. India fully cooperated with the U.S. led sanctions against Iran and withdrew from an Iranian natural gas pipeline project (IPI).⁹⁹ And while Italy and Japan do not have a special relationship with the United States, they both enjoy close relations with the United States and Iran, setting a precedent for India's relationship with Tehran.¹⁰⁰

While there are concerns about religious liberty and other human rights issues, the fact remains that India is still the largest democracy in the world. The country has a population of 1.3 billion people, yet its recent elections have not been questioned or criticized for their legitimacy, and are considered fair and legitimate.¹⁰¹ This is a magnificent achievement on its own. The impressiveness of the elections on increased when looking at the numbers of their turnout. In the 2014 elections, 540 million people, or 66.4% of those eligible at that time, voted,¹⁰² beating out America's 57.5% in the 2012 election.¹⁰³ India also has an impressive parliamentary system where no one party has complete control over everything, ensuring a high level of debate when it

⁹⁹ Akhtar, 2017

¹⁰⁰ Pant, 2006

¹⁰¹ "India's Jumbo Election." *The Economist*, 16 April. 2009, <http://www.economist.com/node/13492427>. Accessed 13 December 2017.

¹⁰² Timmons, Heather. "Here's how India's record-setting voter turnout compares to the rest of the world." *Quartz*, 13 May. 2014, <https://qz.com/208578/heres-how-indias-record-setting-voter-turnout-compares-to-the-rest-of-the-world/>. Accessed 13 December 2017.

¹⁰³ *ibid*

comes to issues facing the country.¹⁰⁴ This shared respect of democracy adds another layer of trust between the two countries.

Even if the success of their democracy is not enough to quell the worries of those that feel this would be an impediment, there is a precedent for America having a special relationship with a country with a shaky human rights record. While the issues surrounding their country are extremely complex, it cannot be denied that Israel, a country America shares a special relationship with, is viewed by many as a major violator of human rights. Despite this, America is still has a strong reputation in the world and this relationship has not hurt American security or economic interests in any major way.

Finally, there is the concern on whether India would want such a relationship. India is a very nationalistic country and can be protective of their independence and sovereignty. However, the fact that the two countries share many of the same security interest in Afghanistan and China means that India would only be accomplishing its own goals by partnering with America.¹⁰⁵ Prime Minister Modi is also the most American friendly leader India has ever had and seems very interested in increasing this relationship.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, a large number of the Indian political establishment were educated in America, increasing the hope that they may be more open to stronger ties with America, while the Indian population views the United States in a very positive light,¹⁰⁷ something that India politicians will want to capitalize on. Finally, Israel,

¹⁰⁴ Kerr, 2011

¹⁰⁵ Ganguly, Sumit. "Advice to the Next President on India and South Asia." *Orbis*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 2017, Pages 101-108.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*

¹⁰⁷ Bell, James, Bruce Stokes, and Richard Wike. "Indians Reflect on Their Country & the World." Pew Research Center. 31 March, 2014. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/03/31/chapter-2-indians-view-the-world/>.

another country very protective of its sovereignty and nationhood, once again serves as precedent regarding how the United States could handle such a relationship and flourish.

Conclusion: Where To Go From Here

If there was ever a time to increase ties between these two countries, it would be now. While the security and economic interest have been aligned for some time now, the political will and capital have only recently been established. While some were worried that Trump's new "America First" policy would get in the way,¹⁰⁸ it is clear from his meeting with Prime Minister Modi¹⁰⁹ and Secretary Tillerson's comments¹¹⁰ that the U.S. government is willing to increase its alliance with India. Public opinion of India grows every year,¹¹¹ and the Caucus of India and Indian Americans is one of the largest country caucuses in the United States.¹¹² The same could be said about India, as Modi has only had kind words for America under both the Obama¹¹³ and Trump administration,¹¹⁴ while, as stated above, public opinion of America is also growing in India. Both countries must capitalize on these trends and start developing this new relationship on issues that they both easily agree on such as countering China and developing the Indian

¹⁰⁸ Harris, Gardniner, and Mark Landler. "Trump Meets India's Leader, a Fellow Nationalist Battling China for His Favor." *The New York Times*, 26 June. 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/us/politics/donald-trump-narendra-modi-india.html>. Accessed 13 December 2017.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*

¹¹⁰ Anand, Manpreet S. "Tillerson's Views on India Defy Trump's Incoherent Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 24 October. 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/24/tillersons-views-on-india-defy-trumps-incoherent-foreign-policy/>. Accessed 12 December 2017.

¹¹¹ Ayres, Alyssa. "How Americans See India As A Powerhttps." *Forbes*, 16 September. 2015, [://www.forbes.com/sites/ayssaayres/2015/09/16/how-americans-see-india-as-a-power/#69472c11313d](https://www.forbes.com/sites/ayssaayres/2015/09/16/how-americans-see-india-as-a-power/#69472c11313d). Accessed 9 November 2017.

¹¹² Rubinoff, Arthur G. "The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-India Relations." *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Pages 169-187.

¹¹³ Gaouette, Nicole, and Elise Labott. "Modi addresses Congress as U.S.-India ties bloom." *CNN*, 16 June. 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/08/politics/modi-speech-u-s-congress-visit/index.html>. Accessed 13 December 2017.

¹¹⁴Gardniner, 2017.

Ocean. The United States should also implement its Major Defense Partner pact that it signed with India earlier¹¹⁵ and improve intelligence sharing as a sign that they are devoted to this alliance and to make up for what happened after the 2008 Mumbai bombing. This will create momentum and trust, allowing the two countries will be able to work out their more complicated issues.

Of course, like all relationships, special or not, this alliance would not be perfect. The United States would have to find a way to properly address the human rights concerns, and both countries would have to make economic concessions. However, the security and economic benefits that would come from this relationship would be tremendous, and will greatly improve both countries' positions on the international stage. The United States must understand that India is linked to their future, while also understanding that they are a young country that is still growing. They are growing quickly, however, and have the potential to be a leading power in Southeast Asia and the world. The geopolitical sphere is a rapidly changing environment, full of rapidly changing alliances and deals. The United States has been on top for a while. If they wish to stay there, they will need India's help. Now is the time to secure that help for decades to come.

¹¹⁵Ankit. 2017.

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