



China-India: Regional Dimensions of the Bilateral Relationship

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Source: *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (WINTER 2015), pp. 108-145

Published by: Air University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26271280>

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China-India

Regional Dimensions of the Bilateral Relationship

Chietigj Bajpae

Abstract

While the Sino-Indian relationship has improved in recent years, it continues to oscillate between periods of cordiality and competition. This is exacerbated by a fundamental mismatch of threat perceptions between both states, rooted in the shifting balance of power and conflicting signals in the bilateral relationship. Moreover, the rise of both countries as major powers has provided them with new tools and platforms to interact with each other, contributing to a spillover of the Sino-Indian relationship from the bilateral to regional levels. Nowhere is this spillover effect or “nested security dilemma” more evident than in the maritime domain—amid the rise of both countries as major trading and resource-consuming powers. After charting the evolution of the Sino-Indian relationship, this article examines the implications of the changing nature of the Sino-Indian relationship on Asia’s expanding strategic geography and US policy making toward Asia.



The year 2014 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” between China and India on 29 April 1954.¹ The signing of this agreement marked the pinnacle of relations between the countries. However, within a decade the bilateral relationship reached its lowest point during a brief border war in 1962.² The fact that there has been no renewed outbreak of hostilities between China and India in the half century since the war is a positive achieve-

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ment. Aside from a few brief conflagrations, notably in Sikkim in 1967 and the Sumdorong Chu Valley in 1987, bilateral tensions have been confined to rhetoric and symbolic posturing.³

Nonetheless, while bilateral relations have improved, they continue to oscillate between periods of cordiality and competition. An underlying climate of mistrust continues to permeate the bilateral relationship—rooted in their unresolved border dispute. This is exacerbated by a fundamental mismatch of threat perceptions between both states, rooted in the shifting balance of power and conflicting signals in the bilateral relationship. Moreover, the rise of both countries as major powers has provided them with new tools and platforms to interact with each other, contributing to a spillover of the Sino–Indian relationship from the bilateral to regional level. Amid the rise of both countries as major trading and resource-consuming powers, this spillover effect or “nested security dilemma” is most evident in the maritime domain.⁴ The fact that China and India are “hybrid powers”—that is, both are established continental and emerging maritime powers—adds to the complexity of their relationship and creates the potential for “horizontal escalation” as tensions along their disputed land border spill over into the maritime domain.⁵ After charting the evolution of the Sino–Indian relationship, this article will focus on the potential for a nested security dilemma in the maritime domain. It also examines the implications of the changing nature of the Sino–Indian relationship on Asia’s expanding strategic geography and US policy making toward Asia.

The Evolving Sino–Indian Relationship

The Sino–Indian relationship cannot be viewed as purely competitive or cooperative. The competitive dynamic in the bilateral relationship has been somewhat tempered by semi-institutional ties, such as the “India–China Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity” that was concluded in 2005, the Strategic Economic Dialogue that began in 2011, and the conclusion of a Border Defense Cooperation Agreement in October 2013.⁶ This complements earlier confidence-building measures reached in 1993 and 1996.⁷

Both countries’ expanding military capabilities have also served to deter the outbreak of an all-out war, though this has also fueled the proclivity for limited stand-offs along their contested border. While lagging

behind China, India's fast-developing nuclear capabilities, including the expanded range of its ballistic missiles and development of a nuclear triad (confirmed by the launch of India's first indigenous nuclear submarine, the *Arihant* in 2009) has led to the presence of a credible nuclear deterrent in the Sino–Indian relationship.⁸

Growing economic interdependence has also served to deter open conflict between the two countries. China has emerged as India's leading trading partner, while India is China's leading trading partner in South Asia.⁹ A plethora of deals were concluded during Chinese president Xi Jinping's visit to India in September 2014 and Indian prime minister Narendra Modi's visit to China in May 2015, including a five-year economic and trade development plan that entails the development of industrial parks and upgrading of India's rail network.¹⁰ Xi also pledged to grant Indian companies, particularly those in the pharmaceutical, agricultural, and IT sectors—where India maintains a comparative advantage—greater access to Chinese markets to correct the long-standing imbalance in the trade relationship.¹¹

However, contrary to rhetorical claims of Indian services complementing Chinese manufacturing and Chinese hardware complementing Indian software, there are limits to the level of economic interdependence between both economies.¹² An underlying disparity in the economic relationship has fueled this situation. Notably, India's exports to China are primarily natural resources, whereas China's exports to India are primarily manufactured and value-added products.¹³ While bilateral trade has grown rapidly, crossing US \$70 billion in 2014, it actually experienced a decline over the previous two years, while India's trade deficit with China has expanded to over \$48 billion—amounting to almost 3 percent of India's gross domestic product.¹⁴ Underlying mistrust in the bilateral relationship has also led to a poor investment relationship, with Chinese investment in India totaling a mere \$400 million between 2000 and 2014—a fraction of China's total overseas investment.¹⁵ This has been fueled by the persistence of non-tariff barriers, including India's national security establishment opposing Chinese investment in strategically important sectors such as ports and telecommunications and the introduction of mandatory local manufacturing rules.¹⁶ India also remains one of the leading initiators of antidumping investigations against China, with the country imposing antidumping duties on 159

Chinese products between 1992 and 2013.¹⁷ This has contributed to India's reluctance to grant "market economy" status to China.¹⁸

At the international level, both countries have cooperated on several issues of global governance through such forums as the Russia-China-India strategic dialogue and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, where they have pledged to combat the threat of terrorism and called for the emergence of a "multi-polar world order".¹⁹ Meanwhile, the G20 and BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) forums have emerged as key platforms for India and China to deepen regional economic integration, as evidenced by recent agreements for settling intra-BRICS trade in their local currencies and establishment of a BRICS New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.²⁰ The BASIC group of countries (comprising Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) has also emerged as a platform for cooperation on international climate-change negotiations.²¹

However, despite rhetoric of an emerging "Himalayan Consensus," there are clear limits to bilateral cooperation on global governance issues.²² For instance, the December 2014 agreement between the United States and China on carbon emission–reduction targets for 2030 contrasts with India's reluctance to secure a similar agreement with the United States.²³ Notwithstanding the Joint Statement on Climate Change that was concluded between China and India in May 2015, there is a growing divergence between China and India on climate policies, with India maintaining a proclivity for a nonbinding approach with common but differentiated responsibilities, climate adaption over mitigation measures, and an emphasis on technology transfer and clean-energy financing.²⁴ The fact that both countries are at different stages of development has prompted this divergence of climate policies. India's per capita energy consumption remains among the lowest in the world; despite being the fifth-largest consumer of fossil fuels, India's per capita energy consumption is five percent that of the United States and 27 percent of China's per capita consumption.²⁵ However, China's per capita energy consumption is likely to plateau as its economy moves away from energy-intensive manufacturing, while there is still significant room for growth in India's energy consumption as it has yet to reach the full potential of its industrial capacity.

Even on regional issues where China and India potentially see eye-to-eye, both countries' differing diplomatic approaches act as barriers to

substantive cooperation. For instance, China and India maintain a joint concern over the destabilization of Afghanistan following the drawdown of Western forces, as both nations face the threat of terrorism emanating from Islamic extremism in Central and South Asia. These concerns have been evidenced by the establishment of a bilateral counterterrorism dialogue and joint exercises between their special forces.²⁶ Both countries have also made modest contributions toward strengthening the Afghan National Security Forces as part of protecting their growing economic interests in Afghanistan. This comes amid both countries' broader "pivot" toward the region under the aegis of China's "Silk Road Economic Belt" and India's "Connect Central Asia" strategy.²⁷

Still, bilateral cooperation on stabilizing Afghanistan remains unlikely as long as both countries maintain a mismatch of vantage points. Notably, China continues to cling to its "all-weather" relationship with Pakistan, while India regards Pakistan as the root of Islamic extremist activity in the region. Moreover, China and India maintain a fundamentally different view of the role of the Afghan Taliban in the future of Afghanistan, with China playing a nascent mediating role and India continuing to regard the Taliban as a threat to stability.²⁸

Border Troubles

At the root of mutual mistrust is the unresolved border dispute, which remains a thorn in the bilateral relationship. While China has resolved some 17 of 23 territorial disputes since 1949, limited progress has been made in the dispute with India under the special representatives' framework, which has been in place since 2003. The Line of Actual Control (LAC), distinguishing the disputed Indian and Chinese sides of the border, remains undemarcated—with no mutual agreement on the exact alignments of the border.²⁹ The fact that the LAC is today a matter of perception increases the potential for inadvertent conflict. Moreover, despite a few conciliatory gestures, such as opening border trade along the Nathu La, Lipu-Lekh, and Shipki La passes, both sides appear to be hardening their positions along the border. This has contributed to a surge in transgressions along the three sectors of the Sino–Indian border: western (Ladakh), middle (Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh), and eastern (Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh). Tensions in the Depsang

Valley of eastern Ladakh in April 2013 and more recently in the Chumur area of Ladakh in September 2014 indicated as much.³⁰

The changing strategic significance of the territorial dispute for both countries has hijacked the relatively simple solution of recognizing the *de facto* borders, which would entail India retaining control of Arunachal Pradesh and China controlling Aksai Chin.³¹ For China, this refers to renewed instability in ethnically Tibetan areas since 2008 and latent concerns in Beijing that the passing of the 14th Dalai Lama may pave the way for the rise of a new generation of more radical Tibetan leaders who will adopt less conciliatory positions toward the Chinese government.³² This has prompted Beijing to reaffirm its sovereignty over the Tibet Autonomous Region while adopting a more stringent position over its claim to all of Arunachal Pradesh, including the symbolically important town of Tawang, which is home to the largest Tibetan monastery outside Lhasa.

There are also no signs of China softening its all-weather relationship with India's long-standing rival, Pakistan. If anything, China appears to have backtracked on its more nuanced approach toward the India–Pakistan relationship that was portrayed by Beijing's neutral stance during the Kargil conflict in 1999.³³ Chinese infrastructure projects in Gilgit-Baltistan (in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) reportedly often supported by the presence of Chinese military personnel, indicate implicit Chinese acceptance of Pakistan's claim over the disputed territory of Kashmir.³⁴ This has been reaffirmed by the conclusion of an agreement in April 2015 to commence work on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor, parts of which pass through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.³⁵ Further evidence of China's increasingly hardline position on the territorial dispute includes the denial of visas and issuing stapled visas to residents and officials from the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.³⁶

China's more aggressive posture on the territorial dispute in recent years can be attributed to the balance of power tilting in China's favor, with its defense budget and economy now being almost four times that of India.³⁷ This has contributed to China's strengthened military capabilities, which in turn have granted Beijing greater confidence and leverage to push India to resolve the territorial dispute on Chinese terms. This stands in contrast to China's offers to resolve the territorial dispute on mutually acceptable terms during periods of greater parity in the Sino–

Indian relationship, which was the case until the mid-1980s. While India has sought to correct this imbalance with the development of a new mountain strike corps and upgrading infrastructure along the disputed border, the asymmetry of material capabilities is likely to grow in the immediate future as China continues to outpace India in the development of border infrastructure.³⁸

An additional dimension to the territorial dispute is the issue of water flows. Given both countries' growing water shortages and their still significant agrarian economies, the water-sharing issue threatens to enflame border tensions. Most of India's river systems originate in China, and the lack of trust stemming from the border dispute has deterred transparency and cooperation between both countries on sharing information on hydrology, dam-construction plans, and water-diversion projects.³⁹

Conflicting Signaling

The increasing complexity of the bilateral relationship is evidenced by the sometimes-contradictory signals that have been sent out by both governments. The emergence of strong and decisive leaders in both countries—Xi Jinping in China and Narendra Modi in India—sets the stage for a clash of increasingly assertive foreign policies.⁴⁰ Modi, who made several visits to China during his tenure as chief minister of the Indian state of Gujarat, has spoken of emulating the Chinese development model while attracting Chinese investment to upgrade India's infrastructure and manufacturing capacity.⁴¹ This alludes to a more cooperative and interdependent relationship. New Delhi maintains an aversion to any overt attempt to bandwagon against China. The fact that Modi visited China before completing his first year in office indicates the priority that he places on India's relationship with China. However, Modi's appointment of hawkish officials such as Vijay Kumar Singh, a retired Indian Army four-star general, to the position of minister of state for the North East Region (bordering China) and Ajit Doval, a former Indian intelligence officer, as national security advisor and special representative on the India-China boundary negotiations, signals a more muscular foreign policy. This has already been evidenced by such gestures as Modi's invitation to the prime minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Lobsang Sangay, to Modi's inauguration in May 2014.⁴²

China has sent similarly conflicting signals on its relationship with India. Beijing has pledged to improve its relationship with New Delhi through expanding Chinese investment.⁴³ This has been complemented by a plethora of high-level official exchanges: Li Keqiang made his first overseas visit as Chinese premier to India in May 2013; Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi visited India shortly after Modi's inauguration in June 2014; and President Xi made an official state visit in September 2014.⁴⁴ However, even as it extends a hand of friendship to India, China is also adopting an increasingly hardline position toward its southern neighbor. This has been most prominently demonstrated by the timing of the most recent border tensions, which coincided with periods of high-level diplomatic exchanges. For examples, the Depsang Valley incident in April 2013 came ahead of the visit of Premier Li, while the tensions in the Chumur area in September 2014 coincided with the visit of President Xi.⁴⁵ Under previous administrations this may have been attributed to factionalism within the Chinese government arising from a more collective style of leadership.⁴⁶ However, under Xi's more centralized leadership this explanation seems less credible.⁴⁷ Xi's ongoing anticorruption campaign, which has entailed the purge of several senior-ranking military officials, may offer a possible explanation for the timing of these border transgressions as aggrieved groups within the People's Liberation Army (PLA) seek to embarrass the political leadership, as well as reaffirm the authority of the military on matters of national security.⁴⁸ Irrespective of whether these were coordinated actions or the result of frictions in civil-military relations, they serve to demonstrate China's proclivity for a carrot-and-stick approach toward India.

The propensity for misunderstanding is also fueled by limited people-to-people contacts, cultural barriers, and rising levels of nationalism that accompany the growing international clout of both countries.⁴⁹ This has been demonstrated by the jingoistic and alarmist media reporting in both countries, which has contributed to a climate of mistrust.⁵⁰ Both countries have sought to remedy this, as noted by the plethora of agreements concluded during Modi's visit to China, including the establishment of additional consulates, the introduction of an e-visa facility for Chinese nationals visiting India, and the establishment of a State/Provincial Leaders' Forum to facilitate interaction between local governments—in addition to stepping up cultural, education, media, and think-tank exchanges.⁵¹ On a more fundamental level, neither

country has much experience in sharing power with the other. In the precolonial period, both civilizational states were essentially masters of their own domain, with a Himalayan divide separating them. However, the emergence of “disruptive technologies,” such as ballistic missiles and cyber warfare, has reduced the strategic “space” between both states, thus, increasing the likelihood for misunderstanding and friction.

Finally, there is a fundamental mismatch of threat perceptions between both countries. Put simply, China is on India’s radar, but India is not on China’s radar to the same extent. While New Delhi focuses much of its foreign-policy attention and military resources on China, Beijing’s primary strategic concerns are related to the US military presence in Asia and potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait, East and South China Seas, and the Korean Peninsula. The economic imbalance in the bilateral relationship has been a further catalyst for mutual misperception between both countries. At present, the Chinese economy is almost three times the size of the Indian economy in terms of purchasing power.⁵² Whether the slowing Chinese economy and India’s demographic dividend will alleviate this imbalance remains to be seen.⁵³

Spillover in the Sino–Indian Relationship

Adding to their unresolved core grievances and conflicted signaling is the emergence of new theaters of interaction between both countries amid their rise as major powers with growing ambitions and capabilities. The joint statement concluded between China and India during Prime Minister Modi’s visit to China in May 2015 acknowledged this growing potential for spillover in the bilateral relationship, noting that “as two major powers in the emerging world order, engagement between India and China transcends the bilateral dimension and has a significant bearing on regional, multilateral and global issues.”⁵⁴ A notable example of this is the increasingly prominent role of third parties in the bilateral relationship—notably China’s longstanding all-weather relationship with Pakistan and India’s more recent rapprochement with the United States. As British historian Geoffrey Till notes, “neither China nor India see each other as their primary antagonist but do note that they are allied to the countries that are—the US and Pakistan respectively.”⁵⁵ This has been supplemented by India’s deepening relationships with Vietnam and Japan—China’s traditional regional adversaries—and China’s deepening relations with states of the Indian Ocean region. The fact that Modi’s

visit to China in May 2015 was accompanied by a visit to South Korea and Mongolia and followed Xi's visit to Pakistan in April illustrates the growing presence of both countries along each other's peripheries.⁵⁶ This is further evidenced by the fact that Xi's visit to India in September 2014 was accompanied by visits to Sri Lanka and Maldives and preceded by Modi's visit to Japan and a visit by Indian president Pranab Mukherjee to Vietnam.

All of this demonstrates the potential for both India and China to leverage relations with third parties to influence their bilateral relationship. Modi's speech at Tsinghua University in May 2015 alluded to this by noting the need to "ensure that our relationships with other countries do not become a source of concern for each other."⁵⁷ India's sense of encirclement is reinforced by the fact that almost 70 percent of China's arms exports in 2010–14 went to Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma—countries along India's periphery.⁵⁸ This includes an "in-principle" deal for the sale of eight Chinese submarines to Pakistan, making it China's most expensive arms export deal to date.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the first trilateral meeting of the foreign ministries of India, Japan, and Australia in June 2015 set the stage for a deepening strategic relationship among these three countries—to the quiet consternation of Beijing.⁶⁰ This comes within the broader context of China's recently unveiled "One Road, One Belt" concept and India's "Act East" policy, which have facilitated an expansion of both countries' extended neighborhoods.

Another example of the spillover of the bilateral relationship to the regional level is each country's growing voice in regional and global forums. In 2009 China attempted to block an Asian Development Bank loan to India, as the loan included funds for the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as South Tibet.⁶¹ The growth of regional and global forums where both countries have a prominent voice, including the BRICS New Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization, could see the emergence of new theaters for cooperation but also potential proxy wars in the bilateral relationship.

Nested Security Dilemma in the Maritime Domain

This spillover effect is captured in the concept of a nested security dilemma.⁶² The concept of a *nested security dilemma* is based on the idea that security dilemmas involving major states have externalities beyond

their bilateral relationship, with implications for regional and global security.⁶³ Employing the concept of a nested security dilemma as an explanatory tool demonstrates how China's and India's responses to each other's actions can have impacts beyond their bilateral relationship, with implications for the wider regional security dynamic.

Expanding Maritime Interests and Capabilities

Further evidence of this nested security dilemma in the Sino-Indian relationship is the emergence of Asia's maritime domain as a platform for interaction and potential competition between both states. China and India have historically been viewed as continental powers, with land-based forces traditionally dominating their militaries while navies have played a secondary role in forging their military doctrines and strategies. Both countries have usually pursued relatively modest naval strategies confined to playing a supporting role to land-based operations and protecting their respective coastlines. China's focus has been on sea-denial capabilities aimed at deterring US intervention in a conflict in the Taiwan Strait, while India has focused on coastal defense and surveillance, given the country's porous, poorly demarcated and disputed maritime border.

However, the rise of China and India as major trading and resource-consuming powers has elevated the strategic importance of the maritime domain. The numbers speak for themselves. More than 90 percent of India's total external trade by volume and 77 percent by value now transits the maritime domain.⁶⁴ This includes more than 70 percent of the country's oil imports.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, more than 90 percent of China's foreign trade by volume and 65 percent by value are seaborne, including 85 percent of its oil imports.⁶⁶ Both countries' expanding maritime interests are also manifested in the emergence of more assertive naval doctrines and the growth of historical narratives that reaffirm the importance of their maritime traditions. In China, growing dependence on imported resources has fueled concerns over a so-called "Malacca Dilemma," which refers to strategic vulnerabilities rooted in China's dependence on resources imported through sea lanes patrolled by potentially adversarial countries.⁶⁷ This has prompted the country's maritime strategy to move beyond its traditional focus on "near-coast defense" toward "near-seas active defense" and increasingly into the realm of "far-sea operations"—or what China's latest defense white paper termed as "open

seas protection.”⁶⁸ China’s maritime ambitions have been reflected in its 2013 defense white paper, noting the need to “develop blue water capabilities” and the introduction of “new historic missions” in 2004, which served to redefine China’s national defense strategy to include new geographic and functional areas. These statements demonstrate a growing consensus that “over the long-term, Beijing aspires to sustain naval missions far from China’s shores,” according to a recent report by the US Office of Naval Intelligence.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, India has declared ambitions to develop “a brand new multi-dimensional Navy” with “reach and sustainability” extending “from the north of the Arabian Sea to the South China Sea.”⁷⁰ Renewed Chinese attention on the naval voyages of Zheng He during the Ming dynasty in the fifteenth century and in India on the naval expeditions of the Chola dynasty during the eleventh century has also demonstrated a concerted effort by both states to elevate the strategic importance of their naval traditions.⁷¹ The views of proponents of expanding naval power, such as the late Chinese admiral Liu Huaqing and the late Indian historian K. M. Panikkar, have also found renewed support during the current maritime renaissance in both states.⁷²

Operationalizing these growing naval ambitions and interests, both countries have rapidly developed their maritime capabilities. China has established a fourth fleet on the southern island of Hainan. This fleet, which will complement the North Sea Fleet based in Qingdao, East Sea Fleet in Ningbo, and South Sea Fleet based in Zhanjiang, demonstrates China’s growing maritime interests in the South China Sea, Indian Ocean, and beyond.⁷³ These expanded capabilities have been revealed in demonstrations of China’s projection of naval power beyond its traditional sphere of interest around the first and second “island chains.”⁷⁴ These include the PLA Navy’s (PLAN) South Sea Fleet deploying a task group for its first training exercise in the eastern Indian Ocean in 2014, a month-long visit of two Chinese missile frigates to the Mediterranean Sea and eastern Atlantic in 2013, as well as deployment of three PLAN vessels to South America the same year, which followed the PLAN’s first naval exercises in the Pacific Ocean in 2011 and its revolving ship deployment in support of antipiracy operations in the Indian Ocean since 2009.⁷⁵ More recently, the Chinese and Russian navies conducted joint naval exercises in the eastern Mediterranean in May 2015.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, India’s tri-services Andaman and Nicobar (Southern) Command, which was established in 2001, has been referred to as India’s

“window into East and Southeast Asia.”⁷⁷ This has complemented the Eastern Command headquartered in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, and a new facility codenamed “Project Varsha” under development near the coastal town of Rambilli, Andhra Pradesh. On the western coast, Indian Naval Station Kadamba in Karwar, Karnataka, aims to protect maritime trade routes in the Arabian Sea, while alleviating pressure on the Western Command in Mumbai.⁷⁸

Both countries also have ambitious plans for the development and acquisition of platforms aimed at strengthening their blue-water naval capabilities. China currently maintains a fleet of 300 surface combatants, submarines, amphibious ships, and patrol aircraft, with more than 60 vessels laid down, launched, or commissioned in 2014 alone. Moreover, its procurement of naval platforms has become increasingly indigenous, with its last import of a major naval platform taking place in 2006.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, India has ambitions to develop a 160-plus-ship navy by 2022, with more than 40 warships and submarines on order or under construction at the country’s three major shipyards.⁸⁰ Moreover, the fact that China and India are two of only three Asian countries and two of only 10 countries in the world to maintain aircraft carriers illustrates their ambition to project power beyond their immediate subregions. Despite the hype surrounding the launch of China’s first aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*, which was commissioned in 2012, the fact that China is in the process of developing two more indigenously-developed carriers (with ambitions for 4–6 carriers) is indicative of the trajectory that Beijing sees for itself in the maritime domain.⁸¹ As military analyst Richard Bitzinger notes, “One aircraft carrier may be symbolic, but four to six carriers is a new maritime strategy.”⁸² Similarly, India has a target to develop three aircraft-carrier battle groups by 2022, which was confirmed by the unveiling of the country’s first indigenously developed carrier, the INS *Vikrant* in 2013, and plans for the development of the larger INS *Vishal* as part of the indigenous aircraft carrier-II project.⁸³ To be sure, China remains a long way from developing the necessary capabilities—including training, doctrine, and support vessels—to successfully operate a carrier battle group.⁸⁴ This comes as aircraft carriers are exposed to growing vulnerabilities amid the proliferation of sea-denial platforms such as submarines, antiship ballistic missiles, and improved surveillance platforms. Nonetheless, any state seeking to project power and exercise sea-control will require carrier-group capability.

Similarly, while some 36 countries maintain submarines in their navies, China and India are two of only six countries with a nuclear-submarine capability. China has recently unveiled its most advanced Type-093G *Shang*-class nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSBN), with the quantity of China's conventional and nuclear submarine fleet now surpassing the United States—though it does not yet match the United States in the quality of its vessels.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, India's first indigenously built SSBN, the INS *Arihant*, is undergoing sea trials, while the first of the country's indigenously built diesel-electric *Scorpene*-class submarine was launched in April 2015.⁸⁶ Both countries' interests in moving beyond their predominantly diesel submarine fleet toward building up their nuclear submarine capability point toward a growing interest in power projection beyond their littoral regions. Both countries' development of multimission platforms, such as China's *Luyang III*-class destroyers and *Jiangdao*-class corvettes and India's acquisition of the INS *Jalashwa* (formerly the USS *Trenton*), a landing platform dock ship acquired from the United States in 2007, also points to a growing interest in power projection.⁸⁷

Clash of Interests

Applying the concept of the nested security dilemma, the rise of China and India as major maritime powers has implications beyond the confines of their bilateral relationship, fueling the potential for both competition and cooperation. On the one hand, discourse of Sino-Indian naval competition has become increasingly common in recent years. Naval analyst Toshi Yoshihara notes for instance that “as New Delhi and Beijing look seaward, both powers will jostle for influence and advantage across the entire Indo-Pacific maritime theatre.”⁸⁸ Indian strategic thinker Raja Mohan adds that the “growth of [China's and India's] naval capabilities and the broadening of their maritime horizons in recent years will extend the security dilemma—which has expressed itself until now in the land of inner Asia—to the waters of the Indian and Pacific Oceans.” In doing so, the bilateral relationship between the two Asian powers has “begun to generate a competitive dynamic enveloping the entire Indo-Pacific littoral.”⁸⁹ George Perkovich echoes this position by noting the emergence of a “swelling Sino-Indian security dilemma into the Indian and Pacific oceans” amid both countries' growing ability to “build capacity to project power and secure their lines of communica-

tion in increasingly distant waters (so that), China will seem to encroach on India's sphere of influence in the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean, while India will seem misplaced in the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca."⁹⁰

Echoing these assessments, naval discourse in both countries increasingly reflects Mahanian thinking, with an emphasis on sea-control and competitive naval diplomacy, while moving away from a traditionally defensive maritime posture. Foreign policy analyst Raja Mohan notes that "as New Delhi and Beijing define their maritime approaches in terms of the US Monroe Doctrine, the two would seem bound to step on each other's toes."⁹¹ Notably, China's increasingly assertive position over territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas has been viewed by some as a harbinger of its potential behavior in the Indian Ocean. This will be the case if China elevates the protection of sea-lines of communication to a "core interest" (*hexin liyi*) on par with its security and sovereignty interests of reclaiming "lost territories." India's maritime doctrine has been even more explicit, stating that "sea control is the central concept around which the Indian navy is structured."⁹²

This competitive dynamic is already evident with China and India challenging each other in their respective littoral spaces in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. For instance, India has echoed the US position on maritime territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas by calling for their peaceful resolution and maintaining the freedom of navigation.⁹³ This has become more emphatic under the Modi government, as noted by the joint statement issued following the visit by Pres. Barack Obama to India in January 2015 that made specific reference to "safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea."⁹⁴ This was the first time both countries made such an explicit reference to the territorial dispute in a bilateral context. Moreover, India has injected itself into the disputes through its pursuit of deepening relations with several claimant states. For instance, India and Japan held their first bilateral naval exercises in June 2012.⁹⁵ India has also agreed to equip Vietnam with naval patrol boats, as well as providing training to the country in underwater warfare, while having discussions to supply Vietnam with India's BrahMos supersonic cruise missile.⁹⁶

This has come to the chagrin of China, which maintains a preference for a bilateral, non-internationalized approach in resolving these dis-

puts. Reports in July 2011 that an Indian navy vessel, the INS *Airavat*, received alleged radio contact from the Chinese navy demanding that the vessel depart disputed waters in the South China Sea after completing a port call in Vietnam illustrate China's opposition to an expanding Indian naval presence in East Asia.⁹⁷ This was followed by the less belligerent but nonetheless provocative gesture of an Indian naval vessel, INS *Shivalik*, receiving a PLAN escort while on its way from the Philippines to South Korea in June 2012.⁹⁸ Beijing has also opposed Vietnam granting exploration rights in offshore blocks located in disputed waters to Indian company ONGC Videsh.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, India has voiced concerns over China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean under the aegis of its Maritime Silk Road (MSR) concept.¹⁰⁰ Unveiled by President Xi in 2013 during a tour of Southeast Asia, the MSR has now extended to the Indian Ocean region, with endorsements from several countries in the region.¹⁰¹ As well as securing maritime trade routes, China's interests in the Indian Ocean are also rooted in the country's deep-sea mining concessions in the southern Indian Ocean.¹⁰² This has led to the emergence of a latent Sino-Indian rivalry in the Indian Ocean, which was evidenced by reports that an Indian attack submarine and Chinese naval unit were "locked in a tense stand-off" near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait in the Gulf of Aden in January 2009.¹⁰³ More recently, a Chinese nuclear attack submarine made its first declared operational deployment into the Indian Ocean in February 2014, while a *Song*-class diesel-electric submarine docked at a Sri Lankan port in September 2014.¹⁰⁴ As international affairs scholar John Garver notes, "by slowly expanding its naval presence in the Indian Ocean, Beijing is trying to create a new status quo."¹⁰⁵ In response to these developments, India has strengthened its antisubmarine capabilities, as demonstrated by the launch of the indigenously built INS *Kamorta* guided-missile destroyer in August 2014.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, the Sino-Indian maritime rivalry is increasingly moving onshore, as manifested by the development of transshipment hubs along maritime trade routes. This "String of Pearls" strategy, which China has sought to rebrand as the more benign MSR, is evidenced by the development of ports along maritime trade routes, including Gwadar in Pakistan and Hambantota in Sri Lanka.¹⁰⁷ As the PLAN has stepped up port calls in the region, there have been calls by some in China to establish a "long-term supply base" near the Gulf of Aden, with some 18 possible

sites reportedly under consideration to establish “overseas strategic support bases” in the Indian Ocean region.¹⁰⁸

India has countered China’s String of Pearls with its own so-called “Necklace of Diamonds.”¹⁰⁹ This is noted by the Indian navy gaining permanent berthing rights at Vietnam’s Na Thrang port, which has confirmed New Delhi’s ability to extend its “sustainable maritime presence” into the South China Sea.¹¹⁰ India’s establishment of a monitoring station in Madagascar complements plans for a similar facility in Mauritius and established berthing rights in Oman, which are expanding the Indian Navy’s permanent presence in the southern Indian Ocean. While claims that these port facilities have a military role are exaggerated at present, it is not inconceivable that both countries could eventually use these commercial ports for multiple purposes, including resupply, refueling, and even surveillance and signals intelligence. However, given their historical aversion to overseas bases, it is more likely that both countries will pursue a strategy of “places, not bases” with arrangements to gain privileged access to overseas facilities rather than establishing permanent overseas bases.¹¹¹ In this context, both countries have sought to court island states in the Indian Ocean region, including Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka, as part of a long-term maritime strategy to secure exclusive security partnerships with states strategically located along important sea-lines of communication.¹¹² Notably, the decision in February 2015 by the Sri Lankan government to review the terms of Chinese investment in a port city project in Colombo, Sri Lanka, alludes to the nascent Sino–Indian rivalry for privileged access to port facilities in the Indian Ocean region.¹¹³

Convergence of Interests

At the same time, the security dynamic in the maritime domain has not been purely competitive, as evidenced by the recent establishment of a bilateral maritime security dialogue between China and India.¹¹⁴ Both countries have also coordinated their antipiracy patrols in the Indian Ocean within the framework of the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction mechanism. As former Indian national security advisor Shivshankar Menon notes, “over the last decade an Indian presence in the waters east of Malacca and a Chinese presence west of Malacca have become the new norm. Both have happened simultaneously and without apparent friction.”¹¹⁵

Both countries have the potential to play a stabilizing and constructive role in the maritime domain. For instance, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HADR) operations have served to enhance the Indian navy's reputation, as noted by its participation in relief operations following the Asian tsunami of 2004 and the cyclone that struck Burma in 2008.¹¹⁶ The Indian navy also escorted US naval vessels transiting the Strait of Malacca as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002.¹¹⁷ In the five years since October 2008, when India began supporting antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, the Indian navy has escorted over 1,100 vessels through the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor, as well as reportedly capturing 100 pirates and foiling more than 40 piracy attempts.¹¹⁸ India has also been successful at regional confidence building in the maritime domain, fueled by the growing frequency of joint naval exercises with regional navies. This includes the biennial Milan (that involves 15 countries since 1995); the search and rescue operations, with Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia since 1997; and Malabar exercises with the United States (and intermittent participation of Japan since 2007). This has supplemented joint bilateral naval exercises with several countries ranging from Singapore (since 1993) to Japan (beginning in 2013) and coordinated patrols with several countries, including Indonesia (since 2002) and Thailand (since 2005). The momentum of these interactions has increased since Prime Minister Modi announced his Act East policy in 2014.¹¹⁹ The Indian navy has since stepped up port calls in East Asia and Oceania, including announcing the first bilateral naval exercises with Australia.¹²⁰

While India has so far taken the lead on regional confidence-building, China's rhetoric of maintaining "harmonious seas" and engaging in military operations other than war suggest that its proclivity for cooperation in the maritime domain could grow as its maritime interests move further from its coastline.¹²¹ This is illustrated by the case of the country's antipiracy operations in the Indian Ocean, where the PLAN has escorted more than 6,000 Chinese and non-Chinese vessels, including UN World Food Program convoys.¹²² Such operations are likely to become increasingly commonplace given the growing outbound investment by Chinese companies, much of which is in countries with unstable regimes. The induction of one of the world's largest hospital ships, the *Peace Ark* in 2008, which was deployed for its first disaster relief mission in 2013 following a typhoon in the Philippines, is further

evidence of the Chinese navy's growing humanitarian response capabilities.¹²³ China's participation in the 2014 Rim of the Pacific exercise in Hawaii is further evidence of the potential for confidence-building and cooperation in the maritime domain.¹²⁴

Ultimately, India and China have a shared interest in maintaining open sea lanes, given the strategic importance of major waterways as transit points for growing trade and resource imports and combatting the scourge of nontraditional security threats—including maritime piracy, terrorism, and arms, narcotics, and people trafficking. In this context, Indian diplomat Shivshankar Menon has proposed the creation of a “Maritime Concert” in which the region's major maritime powers would have collective responsibility to protect the Indian Ocean.¹²⁵

China and India as Hybrid Powers

Complicating the nested security dilemma in the Sino–Indian maritime relationship is the fact that China and India are hybrid powers, meaning they are countries that are both major continental and emerging maritime powers.¹²⁶ In other words, China's and India's ongoing naval transformations challenge the notion that a state's status as a continental or maritime power is permanent, static, or mutually exclusive. The most notable evidence of this is China's near simultaneous unveiling of the dual concepts of a “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “21st Century Maritime Silk Road,” which have been integrated into the One Belt, One Road initiatives. These concepts promote greater infrastructure connectivity, economic integration, and strategic cooperation across China's land and maritime frontiers, respectively.¹²⁷ This reflects the broader regional context in Asia in which sea power and land power are emerging as “an interactive dyad” amid the continued strategic relevance of continental Asia, despite the growing strategic importance of maritime Asia.¹²⁸

This interactive dyad between sea and land power creates the potential for horizontal escalation in the Sino–Indian relationship, with tensions along their disputed land border leading to potential frictions in the maritime domain.¹²⁹ As one Indian strategic analyst notes, “if pushed to the wall or confronting coercion on the Himalayan frontiers, India can use an asymmetric maritime option by targeting China's vulnerability in the IOR [Indian Ocean region].”¹³⁰ Thus, resolving the nested security

dilemma in the Sino-Indian maritime relationship will require transcending the maritime domain and addressing the root causes of mutual mistrust. As Geoffrey Till notes, “naval relations between the two countries [China and India] are largely set by continental concerns.”¹³¹ This implies that maritime confidence building will require addressing unresolved core grievances in the bilateral relationship, namely the long-standing territorial dispute along the shared Himalayan border.

Expanding Asia’s Strategic Geography

Examining the broader implications of the nested security dilemma in the Sino-Indian maritime relationship, the rise of China and India as major trading and resource-consuming powers and their concomitant ability to project power beyond their immediate subregions has widened the strategic geography of Asia. The very emergence of Indo-Asia Pacific, or the Indo-Pacific in its abbreviated form, as a new geopolitical space is a reflection of China’s and India’s abilities to transcend their respective subregions. As former Australian minister for defence Stephen Smith notes, “so significant is India’s rise that the notion of the Indo-Pacific as a substantial strategic concept is starting to gain traction.”¹³² International strategist Rory Medcalf also notes that China is the “quintessential Indo-Pacific power,” given that it is the “expansion of China’s interest, diplomacy and strategic reach into the Indian Ocean that most of all defines the Indo-Pacific.”¹³³

Looking ahead, while the Indian Ocean and South China Sea remain the most likely theaters of a nested security dilemma in the Sino-Indian maritime relationship, it is conceivable to envision new theaters of interaction between both countries. Notably, the emergence of China and India as major maritime powers coincides with both countries’ growing interests in the Middle East. The Middle East, or West Asia, now accounts for 50 percent of China’s oil imports and 70 percent of India’s oil imports.¹³⁴ More broadly, this reflects Asia’s growing resource interdependence with the Middle East. Asia buys 75 percent of the Middle East’s oil exports, which account for half of Asia’s oil consumption.¹³⁵ With the Middle East being home to 65 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves and 45 percent of its natural gas, the symbiotic relationship between East and South Asia as major sources of oil demand and the Middle East as the preeminent oil supplier is set to grow.¹³⁶ Ironically,

while the United States has proclaimed its “pivot” or “rebalance” toward Asia, Asia is simultaneously pivoting toward the Middle East amid both regions’ growing resource interdependence.¹³⁷

This increasingly symbiotic relationship between the Middle East and Asia extends to the security arena, given the need for stability in energy-supplier states and along energy-transit corridors. In this context, prolonged instabilities in the Middle East amid the ongoing Arab uprisings and civil wars in Iraq and Syria, a blockade along the Strait of Hormuz due to conflict with Iran, or disruptions along the Gulf of Aden due to piracy, or terrorism emanating from the Horn of Africa pose growing strategic risks for China, India, and other major oil importing Asian powers. As energy researcher John Mitchell notes, “Asia is more at risk from disruption of Middle East oil supplies than is either Europe or the United States, yet as a whole it is less prepared to deal with such an upheaval.”¹³⁸ China and India are even more vulnerable in this context, given their lack of sizable reserve capacity that would insulate them from supply-side shocks in the event of instabilities in the Middle East.¹³⁹ India’s vulnerability is further exacerbated by the fact that almost 80 percent of its crude imports come through the Strait of Hormuz—compared to just more than 20 percent for China.¹⁴⁰

Furthermore, China’s and India’s interests in the Middle East are not confined to hydrocarbons. Some 40 percent of China’s exports go to the Middle East and North Africa, while more than half of India’s foreign remittances emanate from this region.¹⁴¹ India also maintains a sizable diaspora of more than 6 million people in the Persian Gulf states. China’s and India’s interlinkages with the Middle East extend to the domains of bilateral investment in hydrocarbon storage and refining capacity and nonhydrocarbon projects, such as joint ventures in developing renewables and nuclear power, construction and labor contracts, aid, grants, and sovereign wealth funds.¹⁴²

At present, China’s and India’s economic interactions with the Middle East far exceed their strategic engagement with the region. Both countries remain free riders of the regional security order that has been largely enforced by the United States in the post–Cold War period. However, there are signs of change amid both countries’ strategic dialogue with the Gulf Cooperation Council, China’s appointment of a special envoy for the Middle East in 2002, the establishment of the China–Arab Cooperation Forum in 2004, the launch of India’s “Look West” policy in

2005, and China's appointment of an envoy for the Syrian conflict in 2012.¹⁴³ Both countries have stepped up military-to-military engagement with the region, including with regional navies. India has held annual naval exercises with Oman since 1993; joint naval exercises with Iran in 2003 and 2006; a large-scale Theatre Readiness Operational exercise (Tropex) involving vessels of its Western and Eastern Commands in the Arabian Sea in 2007; as well as exercises with the navies of Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.¹⁴⁴ The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, which was established in 2008, has provided another avenue for India's interaction with navies of the Persian Gulf. China's strategic engagement with the region began with arms transfers to the region, including the sale of CSS-2 missiles to Saudi Arabia and Silkworm missiles to Iran.¹⁴⁵ While the United States remains a key supplier of military hardware to the region, China has expanded its role as evidenced by the sale of DF-21 ballistic missiles to Saudi Arabia and the HQ-9 long-range surface-to-air system to Turkey.¹⁴⁶ China has also participated in the biennial Aman naval exercises with Pakistan in the Arabian Sea since 2007, while making port calls in Cairo, Haifa, and Istanbul in 2012 and holding its first joint naval exercises with Iran in September 2014.¹⁴⁷ The same year, a Chinese frigate was deployed to escort an international convoy that removed Syria's chemical weapons stockpile.¹⁴⁸

Amid China's and India's growing investments in the Middle East and the plethora of instabilities plaguing the region, both countries have also had to strengthen their humanitarian response and expeditionary capabilities. For instance, the Indian navy was used to evacuate its nationals from the civil war in Libya in 2011 and Indian, Sri Lankan, and Nepalese nationals from the conflict in Lebanon in 2006.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, a Chinese missile frigate was deployed to the Mediterranean Sea in early 2011 to support the evacuation of more than 38,000 Chinese nationals from Libya.¹⁵⁰ The instabilities in Yemen have provided the most recent example of the growing HADR capabilities of both countries in the region. In addition to evacuating over 4,500 of its own nationals, India was involved in rescuing civilians from 41 nations.¹⁵¹ Also, the PLAN evacuated more than 600 of its nationals, as well as civilians from 15 other countries in Yemen.¹⁵² Renewed instabilities in Iraq will further test China and India, given their sizable interests in the country. These

include the presence of some 10,000 Chinese nationals in Iraq and China's position as a leading buyer of Iraqi oil.¹⁵³

Looking ahead, the Sino–Indian maritime relationship in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean offers a potential indicator of how the bilateral relationship could play out in the Middle East. In this context, a more complex dynamic could emerge in the region as the unipolar external presence of the United States gives way to a more multipolar orientation in which the Sino–Indian relationship serves to overlay pre-existing fissures in the region. However, an alternative outlook for the Sino–Indian relationship is evidenced by the fact that China and India have often shared overlapping perspectives on developments in the Middle East. This is evidenced by both countries' historically close relations with countries that the United States has labelled pariah regimes, including Iran, Syria, and Libya, as well as China's and India's concerns regarding the Arab uprisings and opposition to Western military intervention in Libya and Iraq. This leads to the potential for a greater convergence of interests between both countries in the Middle East. However, this also alludes to a different dynamic between regional and extraterritorial powers, with a reversion to traditional Westphalian norms of interaction emphasizing sovereignty, territorial integrity, and nonintervention over humanitarian intervention and democratic regime change. Ultimately, China's and India's growing maritime interests and capabilities offer to both widen the strategic geography of Asia and change the nature of their bilateral relationship.

Implications for US Policy toward Asia

The evolving Sino–Indian relationship also has implications for the US policy toward Asia. First, the United States has not been a bystander to the evolving Sino–Indian relationship. In many ways the spillover or nested security dilemma of the Sino–Indian relationship has been facilitated by the United States, as the country has actively sought to draw India deeper into the regional security architecture of East Asia. The plethora of statements by senior US officials in support of a stepped-up Indian role in the region is evidence of this. For instance, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has stated that the United States has “made it a strategic priority to support India's ‘Look East’ policy and encourage Delhi to play a larger role in Asian institutions and affairs.”¹⁵⁴

Ben Rhodes, deputy national security advisor, has noted that “just as the United States, as a Pacific Ocean power, is going to be deeply engaged in the future of East Asia, so should India as an Indian Ocean power and as an Asian nation.”¹⁵⁵ President Obama has called on “India to ‘engage East’,” while the joint statement reached between India and the United States has noted a “shared vision for peace, stability and prosperity in Asia, the Indian Ocean region, and the Pacific region.”¹⁵⁶ Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has noted that “India is the lynchpin” of US strategy “in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia.”¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Deputy Secretary of State William Burns has noted, “India’s strong presence across the Indian and Pacific Oceans is a source of comfort and affirms its potential as a net security provider in the maritime domain.”¹⁵⁸

Moreover, India–US strategic cooperation is being cemented by a shared perception of the rise of China as an emerging maritime power amid “a common Indo–Pacific maritime challenge emerging from the People’s Republic of China to India in the Indian Ocean and to the United States in the Pacific Ocean.”¹⁵⁹ International relations scholar David Scott adds that “US–India formal agreements and informal understanding are being constructed and carefully calibrated in the Indo-Pacific with China considerations very much in mind (and in deployment patterns), even if not in official speech.”¹⁶⁰ International security specialist Ashley Tellis has also noted the linkage between China’s growing maritime power-projection capabilities and India–US cooperation: “Beijing’s recent appearance in the northern Indian Ocean has effectively unified the Indo-Pacific strategic space in a way that strengthens New Delhi and Washington’s already converging interests.”¹⁶¹

Furthermore, as the region’s dominant military power and sea-based balancer, the United States has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the emergence of China and India as major maritime powers does not undermine the stability of the maritime global commons. As Mohan notes, “as the economic stakes of China and India in the oceans steadily expand and the two sides proceed with the building of powerful navies, a substantive and open-ended dialogue between the two security establishments on maritime and naval issues has become an urgent imperative.”¹⁶² In this context, while India and China have established a bilateral maritime security dialogue, this initiative remains largely consultative and lacks a rules-based structure.¹⁶³ A more robust initiative


could be an “incidents at sea agreement” between both countries, which would echo a similar agreement reached between the United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1972 at the height of the Cold War in the Incidents on and over the High Seas agreement. This would facilitate information exchange, provide a mechanism to manage incidents, and ultimately strengthen mutual understanding. The United States could seek to facilitate this process.

Conclusion

Historically, the strategic weight of China and India in Asia has made their bilateral relationship a microcosm of broader regional dynamics and a harbinger of the regional architecture. During the colonial period, interaction between China and India was subordinated to colonial rivalries, as Indian opium and soldiers were used to gain markets and quash rebellions in China.¹⁶⁴ In the postcolonial period, initial cordiality in the Sino–Indian relationship was accompanied by Asian and developing-world solidarity through such initiatives as the 1947 Asian Relations Conference and the “Bandung spirit” of 1955, which became the precursor to the Non-Aligned Movement and Asia-Africa Summit. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, also known as the Panch-sheel Agreement, not only served as a symbol of friendship between two of the world’s most populous countries but also codified the process of interaction within the developing world and became an antecedent to subsequent norms of regional interaction, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.¹⁶⁵ Finally, growing animosity in the Sino–Indian relationship was accompanied by a fracturing of the regional architecture along the Cold War divide. As Menon notes, the 1962 Sino–Indian war “brought a sense of dismay to pan-Asian aspirations: if Asia’s two largest nations were in discord, pan-Asian concord was a pipedream.”¹⁶⁶

This linkage between the nature of the Sino–Indian relationship and the regional order will continue to gain momentum in the post–Cold War period, as the rise of both countries as major regional and global powers with growing political, economic, and military weight in the international system makes their bilateral relationship more strategically significant. Moreover, the multidimensional nature of the Sino–Indian relationship has served to further amplify the significance and complex-

ity of the bilateral relationship. On one hand, border frictions, resource competition, and both countries' engagement with each other's strategic rivals will remain sources of mutual mistrust in the bilateral relationship. On the other hand, China is also an increasingly important economic partner for India and a potential ally on issues of global governance.

To be sure, in recent years the Sino-Indian relationship has been subordinated to increasingly pragmatic foreign-policy approaches by both countries. This is in stark contrast to their ideologically-driven foreign policy during the Cold War, which was embedded in India's Nehruvian nonalignment and China's Maoist vision of revolutionary world struggle. This newer approach will serve to temper any rash or aggressive foreign-policy actions. Instead, as both countries remain focused on growth, development, and consolidation of political power, any rivalry is likely to manifest itself in the realm of rhetoric, economics, military modernization, and competition for allies. Nonetheless, given their growing strategic weight in the international system, the relationship between these two emerging powers cannot be overlooked. The last major conflagration between the two coincided with (and was overshadowed by) the Cuban missile crisis. However, unlike their brief border war in 1962, future hostilities in the Sino-Indian relationship are likely to take center stage rather than being relegated to a mere sideshow. 

Notes

1. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence—also known as the Panchsheel Agreement/Treaty—refers to mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual nonaggression; noninterference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.

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