



To: **President Donald J. Trump**

From: **Bharath Gopaldaswamy**

Date: **June 22, 2017**

Re: **An Historic Opportunity to Partner with India**

### **BACKGROUND: THE OPPORTUNITY**

- During his visit this week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will aim to strengthen the India-US security partnership in order to counter an increasingly aggressive China. This is a major break from India's traditional, nonaligned status and will offer your best opportunity to partner with India to address growing security challenges posed by China.
- The US-India relationship has enjoyed a recent upward trajectory due to Prime Minister Modi's efforts, in which he has invested significant political capital. He hopes to forge a strong personal chemistry with you, and a robust security relationship, particularly by increasing defense trade, with the United States.
- Commonalities between the United States and India provide a genuine platform for cooperation. Both countries considerably value political systems centered on democratic cooperation and western values, and each realizes the need to ensure that Beijing behaves by the rules of the post-World War II institutional order that the United States helped build.
- While India has not yet shifted from its historical policy of strategic autonomy, statements by Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar indicate that policy makers envision a "leading" Indian role in Asia, rather than only a balancing role to counter China. According to Modi's vision, India wishes to assume a leading role in ensuring the safety and security of the Indian Ocean region. India's potent geostrategic location and status as a rising power make it an ideal partner for US cooperation. The United States should take advantage of this position to work with India as a leader as well as a balancer wherever and whenever applicable.
- India worries that China is increasingly challenging American primacy in the "command of the commons"—in the air, space, and on the high seas. Disagreements over issues such as the South China Sea pose a threat to US dominance given the area's strategic significance.
- India sees China as being heavily invested in establishing its presence as an economic superpower across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and even Europe, as well as the Indian Ocean region—long seen as India's sphere of strategic influence. With the advance of China's Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese military footprint will extend all the way from the Mediterranean to Guam.
- As naval powers, the United States and India must have unfettered access to international sea lanes that Beijing intends to restrict and control; thus, a closely coordinated US-India policy toward China is imperative.

### **A POTENTIAL OBSTACLE**

- Your desire to return outsourced information technology services to the United States would cost India economically. Such policies would also pose a hindrance for bilateral trade and impede further cooperation. While appealing in the short term, such policies may inflict greater long-run costs to US security interests.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: “THE FUTURE OF THE US-INDIA SECURITY PARTNERSHIP”

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Partnering with India could help the United States advance its own security interests, as well as counter the Chinese penchant for aggression in the Indo-Asia region. The United States should assist India by providing it with the means to maintain a “commanding position” in the Indian Ocean region. Such a policy would bolster Indian capacity through the sale of maritime and surveillance technologies while also spurring domestic business growth and job creation here in the United States. India particularly needs assistance in three domains—carrier aviation, space surveillance, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

- **Adopt a long-term plan to enhance Indian naval capabilities.** Neglect of the development of aircraft carrier assets such as launch systems and sensor technology has resulted in severe naval disadvantages for India vis-à-vis China. The botched sale of the Russian-built INS *Vikramaditya*, which was delivered five years late and at nearly triple the agreed price, raised major concerns in New Delhi about the reliability of other sources for arms, providing a huge opportunity for greater US involvement in future Indian naval development.
- **Collaborate to enhance Indian space surveillance assets.** Build upon existing collaboration between civilian space programs in areas such as weather information sharing. Greater data sharing between space assets should be encouraged. The United States will benefit from data obtained from Indian satellites, helping to improve comprehensive Maritime Domain Awareness in the Indian Ocean region.
- **Bolster UAV assets.** Enhance Indian border surveillance capabilities by approving the sale of drones for surveillance purposes. Current US policy restricts the sale of UAVs for non-lethal surveillance capabilities. However, US drone technology outclasses current indigenously and Israeli-built Indian assets and will greatly enhance India’s surveillance capabilities of Chinese military infrastructural developments in the border areas. The United States should also pursue the sale of lethal drones, which are capable of precision strikes against non-state groups operating on the border. Such an agreement will offer domestic economic benefits, spur job creation in the United States, and help to advance US counterterrorism objectives in turn.



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