

INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGIC PAPERS



Enhancing the Australia-India Defence Relationship

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Abstract

This paper contends that India is re-emerging as a major regional power. Its greater influence and security responsibilities in the Indo-Pacific region have led Australia to seek ways to enhance its defence relationship with India. While noting that positive outcomes are already being achieved as a result of improving maritime security cooperation between the Australian and Indian navies, the paper proposes several policy initiatives that would contribute further to the enhancement of the defence relationship between the two countries.

It firstly analyses the changing strategic environment within the Indo-Pacific region in order to better understand the implications for the Australia-India defence relationship. It then identifies the converging security interests of Australia and India, as well as the constraints that may inhibit further development of the relationship. It then provides policy recommendations to strengthen and enhance defence cooperation, emphasising congruence and common security priorities, including improved military-to-military counter-terrorism cooperation. It concludes, however, that Australia will need to demonstrate patience in developing this relationship, citing the model of Australia's defence relationship with Indonesia.

Enhancing the Australia-India Defence Relationship

India has been very economical in its foreign entanglements but not engagements. We have so far resisted siren calls for us to do what others want us to, in the name of being 'responsible' or 'stepping up to the plate'. This shows an acute awareness on our part, but not others, of the extent and limits of India's power and its potential uses, and a clear prioritisation between our interests and between our goals.

Shiv Shankar Menon, Indian National Security Advisor, 2013 ¹

Introduction

The international system is undergoing a shift, strongly influenced by Asia's rise and the economic challenges currently impacting on the US.² This has informed various assessments that question the notion of the US retaining its current hegemony, especially within the Indo-Pacific region, through the remainder of this century.³ Furthermore, Peter Varghese, Secretary of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has asserted that:

[t]he broad contours of the 21st century international system are now apparent, even if the detail is not: a system populated by several power centres and competing conceptions of domestic and international order. A world in which no country or region, or political or economic model, will enjoy uncontested dominance.⁴

The Indo-Pacific regional changes associated with these assessments include the re-emergence of China as a global economic power and a regional military power; the re-emergence of India as a regional economic power and a South Asian military power; and the associated expansion of the areas of strategic interest of China and India beyond their respective traditional areas of interest.⁵ Both China and India have been able to achieve this re-emergence by capitalising on the post-Cold War decades of an open international trade system and the free flow of foreign direct investment and capital.⁶

This shift in the international system has influenced Australian politicians and academics to use the term 'Asian Century' to describe the assessed economic dominance of the rising major powers of the Indo-Pacific region during the 21st century.⁷ The Australian Government's 2012 White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century* asserted that '[w]ithin only a few years, Asia will not only be the world's largest producer of goods and services, it will also be the world's largest consumer of them ... [as well as] home to the majority of the world's middle class'.⁸ The standout performer in the Indo-Pacific region has been China, closely followed by a re-emerging India.

The re-emergence of China and its potential impact on the Indo-Pacific region has been the subject of significant analysis and strategic review over the last decade. Current assessments indicate that China's GDP is rapidly closing on that of the US and is likely to overtake it within the next 10 years.⁹ This economic success has significantly improved the prosperity of China's population and, commensurate with its growing economic power, China has gained greater international status, power and global influence.¹⁰

Almost simultaneous with the re-emergence of China has been the re-emergence of India. Despite its GDP still lagging well behind China's, its position as the third largest economy in the Indo-Pacific region is impressive, considering it commenced its economic restructure and reform program a decade after China.¹¹ Like China, India is seeking increased international status, regional power and influence to match its growing economic strength.¹²

The re-emergence of India as a major regional power means that it is assuming greater security responsibilities in the Indian Ocean region and is starting to be viewed as a significant strategic player in the Pacific. Several observers have also identified that India is beginning to view Australia as one of several new security partners in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, David Brewster suggests that while India has not articulated a grand strategy for the Indo-Pacific, and

appears unlikely to do so in the near future, New Delhi's key objectives for regional engagement include 'economic integration, balancing China, achieving strategic autonomy within a multipolar regional order, recognition of India's proper power status in the region, and expanding India's strategic space into Southeast Asia'.¹³

India's re-emergence as a major regional power has led Australia to seek ways to enhance its defence relationship with India. The framework for the development of the relationship was set out in the 2009 Australia-India Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation.¹⁴ Additionally, the Australian Government's 2013 'India Country Strategy' asserted that the defence objectives for Australia's enhanced relationship with India included the establishment of a more comprehensive defence relationship, involving the construction of a 'broad program of bilateral exercises, training activities, exchanges and dialogue' and improved counter-terrorism cooperation.¹⁵

This paper proposes several policy initiatives that would contribute to the enhancement of the relationship. It firstly analyses the changing strategic environment within the Indo-Pacific region in order to better understand the implications for the Australia-India defence relationship. It then identifies the converging security interests of Australia and India, as well as the constraints that may inhibit further development of the relationship.

The second half of the paper draws from the earlier analysis to identify the opportunities available to enhance the Australia-India defence relationship. It then provides policy recommendations to strengthen and enhance defence cooperation, emphasising congruence and common security priorities, including improved military-to-military counter-terrorism cooperation. These enhancements would build on the positive defence relationship outcomes being achieved as part of the improving maritime security cooperation that is already occurring between the Australian and Indian navies.

Part 1: Changing strategic environment and implications for the Australia-India defence relationship

A number of politicians and commentators have written about the re-emergence of India within the Indo-Pacific region and the subsequent need for Australia to develop a more effective relationship with India. The *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper similarly asserted that 'India's growing economic and strategic weight will increasingly influence the balance of power within Asia, and amplify India's global influence', thereby indicating the importance of developing the Australia-India relationship.¹⁶

India's recent emergence as an economic and regional power has certainly informed Australia's intent to enhance its defence relationship with India into a more substantive and constructive relationship, as confirmed by Stephen Smith, then Australian Minister for Defence, who asserted in 2011 that:

India's rise as a world power is at the forefront of Australia's foreign and strategic policy, as is the need to preserve maritime security in the Indian Ocean. India and Australia, with the two most significant and advanced navies of the Indian Ocean rim countries, are natural security partners in the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁷

Re-emergence of India within the Indo-Pacific region

The re-emergence of India has been underpinned by its remarkable economic growth since the commencement of its economic restructuring and reform program of the early 1990s. The reforms have shifted India away from a state-dominated economy to more liberal economic policies of market reform that have enabled greater integration into the global economy.¹⁸ New Delhi's decentralised economic model has enabled India to transform its economy to grow rapidly from US\$433 billion in 1991 to US\$1.67 trillion by 2014.¹⁹ Furthermore, this economic growth has enabled New Delhi to increase its defence spending from US\$11.8 billion in 2001 to US\$36.3 billion in 2014.²⁰

In addition to this economic resurgence, India has also broadened its regional engagement. During the Cold War, New Delhi adopted a policy of non-alignment, while also developing a reliance on the Soviet Union, which became India's strategic guarantor and major economic partner.²¹ The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s created an economic and foreign policy challenge for India that significantly influenced New Delhi's economic reform and forced the development of a foreign policy that emphasised regional economic cooperation.²²

As a result, New Delhi implemented a 'Look East' policy, primarily as an economic initiative to engage the rising economies in East and Southeast Asia, while concurrently re-establishing the political relationships with East and Southeast Asia nations that had waned during the Cold War.²³ Since its implementation, New Delhi's 'Look East' policy has broadened to include political and regional security dimensions.²⁴

Of particular note for the development of the Australia-India relationship is New Delhi's evolving strategic partnership with Tokyo, which was initially focused on mutual economic and political interests. By 2006, the relationship had deepened as a result of Beijing's increasingly assertive behaviour in managing its territorial disputes with New Delhi and Tokyo.²⁵ The partnership was reinforced following an agreement in early 2014 to strengthen onshore, maritime and aerial defence cooperation.²⁶

This agreement included the continuation of ministerial security and strategic dialogues, and joint naval exercises.²⁷ This is instructive for the Australia-India strategic relationship as it demonstrates that New Delhi, despite its history of non-alignment, is prepared to develop robust bilateral partnerships when India's national interests converge with that of another nation.

There is also evidence that New Delhi's developing strategic partnership with the US is having a significant impact on balancing China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Since President Bill Clinton's visit to India in 2000, the US-Indian strategic partnership has developed a broad base including bilateral agreements or dialogue ranging from defence, trade and investment, space technology, civil nuclear energy, cyber security, through to agriculture and health.²⁸ The developing US-India security partnership has also contributed to the framework of the US 'rebalance' to the Asia-Pacific region.²⁹ This was confirmed by US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta in 2012 when he asserted that:

After a decade of war, we are developing a new defence strategy - a central feature of which is a 'rebalancing' toward the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, we will expand our military partnerships and our presence in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia. Defence cooperation with India is a linchpin in this strategy. India is one of the largest and most dynamic countries in the region and the world, with one of the most capable militaries. India also shares with the United States a strong commitment to a set of principles that help maintain international security and prosperity.³⁰

However, New Delhi has insisted that the Indian-US strategic partnership is not an alliance and that India intends to retain its strategic autonomy.³¹ India's desire to retain its strategic autonomy will also influence how the Australia-India defence relationship develops, which is discussed later in the paper, but does not negate the fact that India has converging strategic interests with other nations in the Indo-Pacific region.

Converging strategic interests of Australia and India

Australia and India are the two largest maritime powers of the littoral nations of the Indian Ocean. The Australia-India Institute contends there is an 'essential congruence in Australian and Indian strategic interests on many issues, and that in some ways they are natural economic and security partners'.³² This congruence is primarily informed by shifts in the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region associated with China's growing assertiveness and the economic importance of the Indian Ocean for both Australia and India.³³ Both India and Australia also share concerns regarding the threat of Islamic extremism on the unity of their respective populations.

The near simultaneous re-emergence of India and China has created regional rivalry between these two large nations. Initially, the primary focus of Sino-Indian strategic rivalry was South Asia, including their longstanding border dispute in the Himalayas and China's decision to develop a 'quasi-alliance' with Pakistan.³⁴ Over time, this rivalry has extended to include Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Indian Ocean region.³⁵ It encapsulates their rapidly expanding economic relationship, growing competition in energy security and rivalry in maritime security.³⁶ Some observers have argued that it is exemplified by China's economic and infrastructure assistance to India's neighbours, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar, which is sparking fears of a 'string of pearls' of Chinese client states designed to contain India, thereby increasing New Delhi's concerns regarding Beijing's intentions.³⁷

Furthermore, the recent assertive behaviour by China over maritime territorial claims and resource rights within the Indo-Pacific region have not only reinforced India's concerns regarding Beijing's intentions but has also raised concerns for Australia.³⁸ These shared concerns are also fuelled by Beijing's 'unexplained military modernisation program'—including the procurement of significant force projection capabilities such as aircraft carriers—which has raised suspicions that China is potentially seeking to eventually replace the US as the pre-eminent power in the Indo-Pacific region.³⁹ This modernisation program has been accompanied by an increased Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean.⁴⁰ Consequently, India and Australia increasingly share a common apprehension about China's intentions in the Indo-Pacific region.⁴¹

However, Australia and India are also cautious not to act in a manner that might be misconstrued by China as a threat or contributing to a US-led containment strategy. As Frederic Grare asserts, '[b]oth states see a number of disadvantages and few benefits in looking confrontational when it comes to China'.⁴² This approach by both Australia and India reflects that China is an important trade partner for both countries—in 2013, Sino-Indian bilateral trade was US\$65.87 billion and Sino-Australian bilateral trade was approximately A\$150 billion.⁴³ This has created a strategic dilemma for Australia and India, which has influenced the development of their mutual defence relationship—neither wants to antagonise China but both want to check the development of a 'China-dominated regional order'.⁴⁴

Australia and India's apprehension with respect to China has been reinforced by a degree of uncertainty regarding the US response to China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁵ This uncertainty has been shaped by the first Obama Administration indicating a willingness to accommodate some of the interests of a re-emerging China, quickly followed by the same administration announcing the US 'pivot' into the Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁶ Washington has since de-emphasised the pivot, with the Obama Administration seemingly pre-occupied with the Middle East and distracted by the collapse of the US-Russian relationship,⁴⁷ thereby creating uncertainty for Indo-Pacific nations.⁴⁸

Rory Medcalf has posited that this uncertainty is influencing 'middle powers' in the Indo-Pacific region to seek solutions 'beyond their traditional approaches to security', citing that Japan, India and Australia are expanding security cooperation with each other.⁴⁹ He further suggests that a coalition of Indo-Pacific middle powers, cooperating on issues ranging from security dialogues and intelligence sharing to technology sharing, could build 'regional resilience against the vagaries of US-China relations'.⁵⁰ However, the regional uncertainty regarding US intentions needs to be balanced against the resilience of the longstanding US-Australia alliance and the recent India-US strategic rapprochement, both of which shape the growing strategic relationship between Australia and India.⁵¹

The relationship between Australia and India is also shaped by their shared interest in maintaining security in the Indian Ocean region. Both countries rely on the freedom of navigation across the Indian Ocean for trade—and, in India's case, for energy supply—with the Australia's *2013 Defence White Paper* asserting that:

The Indian Ocean is increasingly important to Australia, both in terms of our own trading interests and the fact that Australia's major trading partners rely on energy resources transported across the Indian Ocean to sustain their trade with Australia. The Government will engage closely with other countries with interests in the region to ensure that Indian Ocean

dynamics are supported by the evolution, over time, of a more robust regional security architecture that provides mechanisms for the exchange of perspectives and management of the regions security challenges.⁵²

The shared interest of Australia and India in maintaining maritime security in the Indian Ocean was reinforced as a priority during the visit by Australia's Prime Minister Tony Abbott to India in early September 2014, in which both countries 'emphasised their interest in building closer cooperation in the maritime domain'.⁵³ Both prime ministers also identified the importance of working together to counter terrorism, commending the work of the Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism.⁵⁴

Australia and India have a longstanding Memorandum of Understanding on Counter-Terrorism.⁵⁵ India has also asserted at various regional forums its willingness to undertake counter-terrorism cooperation with other regional partners.⁵⁶ The recent emergence of the Islamic State terrorist group has resulted in a number of Australian and Indian citizens travelling to the Middle East to fight with it, raising the risk that they will return home to continue fighting for the Islamic State cause.⁵⁷ Indeed, Islamic State has directly threatened to conduct attacks in both Australia and India,⁵⁸ reinforcing the need for further counter-terrorism cooperation.

More broadly, the Australia-India defence relationship is informed by a 'shared desire to promote regional and global security' and 'achieve the objective of a prosperous, open and secure Asia'.⁵⁹ Moreover, the combination of fundamental shifts in the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region, the importance of maritime security in the Indian Ocean and the rising terrorist threat have reinforced the requirement for an enhanced Australia-India defence relationship.

The Australia-India Institute asserts that 'Australia can no longer rely on some of the certainties that have underpinned its strategic posture for many decades'.⁶⁰ India is also subject to strategic imperatives that are likely to make Australia an important security partner in coming years'.⁶¹ Additionally, Brewster asserts that 'Australia and India share many common perspectives on maritime security and regional stability which could form the basis of an active security partnership'.⁶² However, while progress is being made on maritime security cooperation, Australia and India's converging strategic interests indicate that both countries need to work harder to further enhance their defence relationship.⁶³

Constraints to enhancing Australia-India defence cooperation

Despite converging strategic interests, there is a degree of asymmetry to the security interests between Australia and India. Australia arguably has greater interest in its defence relationship with India than India has with Australia, while India's growing strategic influence has resulted in a number of countries actively courting India for greater defence engagement.⁶⁴ Consequently, Australia should continue to demonstrate to India the value of close and candid collaboration.

A key challenge is the differing strategic cultures of the two nations. Australia's is dominated by the notion of strategic collaboration, regional cooperation and working as part of a coalition.⁶⁵ In contrast, India's strategic culture continues to draw on its history of non-alignment, which is primarily focused on independence and the national objective of retaining 'strategic autonomy'.⁶⁶ Consequently, Brewster contends that India is inclined to be 'suspicious of foreign engagements' and to avoid any activity or agreement that could 'be remotely construed as involving an alliance'.⁶⁷

However, the election of the Modi Government in mid 2014 may reduce this challenge, particularly since the election manifesto of his Bharatiya Janata Party did not reaffirm non-alliance but instead supported the need to create a 'web of allies to further India's interests'.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Australia's policy approach needs to respect India's strategic culture, while employing 'the patient approach of quietly and steadily building meaningful bottom-up military functional cooperation'.⁶⁹ This would not be the first time that Australia has used such an approach. Its closest neighbour, Indonesia, also has a tradition of non-alignment and strategic autonomy that Canberra has been able to respect while patiently developing an effective defence relationship with the Indonesian military.⁷⁰

An additional challenge to enhancing defence cooperation is New Delhi's perception that Australia is not an independent strategic actor because of its history of collaboration with great powers, especially the US.⁷¹ This perception runs counter to how India perceives its own behaviour as a strategically-independent country that has traditionally avoided foreign power entanglements. Indeed, as asserted by Brewster, 'strategic autonomy should be seen as part of India's national DNA, just as strategic collaboration is part of Australia's'.⁷²

Some Indian officials consider Australia to be a junior partner of the US.⁷³ There is also some evidence to suggest that Australia's enduring cooperation with Pakistan has been at the expense of its relationship with India.⁷⁴ These issues, according to Brewster, have all contributed to key officials within India's Ministry for External Affairs not viewing Australia as an engagement priority, and their resources not being prioritised to enhance the defence relationship.⁷⁵

Divergent views on China's strategic intent also challenge the enhancement of the Australia-India defence relationship. As previously indicated, Australia and India share concerns regarding China's recent assertive behaviour, especially in relation to its maritime territorial claims in the South China Sea and the 'unexplained modernisation' of its expeditionary military capabilities.⁷⁶ However, there are divergent views regarding China's intent in the Indian Ocean and South Asia.

India views China's expansion into the Indian Ocean region, especially the development of its so-called 'string of pearls', combined with its robust relationship with Pakistan and recent assertive behaviour along their shared Himalayan border, as part of a deliberate containment strategy against India's re-emergence as a regional power.⁷⁷ In contrast, Australia has a tendency to be 'more understanding of China's interests in protecting its trade routes in the Indian Ocean and treats the talk of a 'strings of pearls' with a degree of scepticism'.⁷⁸ Consequently, while their shared concern about the growing assertiveness of China has been a key influence in the development of the Australia-India defence relationship, it has been tempered by their divergent views regarding China's intent in the Indian Ocean region.

The enhancement of the current Australia-India defence relationship is further challenged by differing perspectives on the role of defence relationships.⁷⁹ Australia has regularly used its defence relationships with regional partners to further its foreign policy aims, as illustrated in Australia's *2013 Defence White Paper* which indicated that:

Australia's international defence engagement is a critical component of the Government's approach to managing the strategic transformation occurring in our region. As regional countries strengthen their military capabilities, Australia will build deeper strategic partnerships and contribute positively to the region's security and stability – while at the same time managing strategic uncertainty.⁸⁰

India has a narrower view of the purpose of its defence relationships. Specifically, New Delhi does not see the Indian military as a key foreign policy contributor.⁸¹ Consequently, all defence engagement and cooperation activities must be cleared through the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, which tends to result in delays and constraints on any new proposal. Furthermore, the Indian military does not have a unified joint military command; therefore, all liaison is conducted through the Ministry of Defence direct to the services, creating challenges for India to provide coordinated joint responses to opportunities for cooperation.

Summary of key observations

This part of the paper has demonstrated that India's recent re-emergence as a regional power has meant that Australia and India have converging strategic interests that influence the need to develop an enhanced defence relationship. These converging strategic interests are primarily shaped by China's recent assertive behaviour and the shared Australia-India desire to retain stability in the Indian Ocean. Their interests are also being shaped by shared counter-terrorism concerns, especially in light of the emergence of the Islamic State extremist group.

Furthermore, the discussion has identified that the Australia-India defence relationship is informed by a 'shared desire to promote regional and global security' and 'achieve the objective

of a prosperous, open and secure Asia'.⁸² However, the enhancement of the Australia–India defence relationship is constrained by an asymmetry in security interests between the two countries, differing strategic cultures, divergent views regarding China’s intent in the Indian Ocean region and differing perspectives of the role of defence relationships to further foreign policy aims.

This suggests that Australia needs to take a measured, long-term approach to further enhancing its defence relationship with India. The Australia-India Institute, in its *Beyond the Lost Decade* report, has identified that:

[t]he key is Canberra’s ability to keep its patience, and nudge India towards advance without pushing it too much or too quickly. India is the elephant, it moves slowly but surely. The Australian kangaroo, in contrast, is nimble and hops much more quickly.⁸³

Part 2: Policy recommendations

This part of the paper provides policy recommendations that would contribute to the enhancement of the Australia-India defence relationship, with an end-state of delivering a relationship that is more substantive and constructive. It draws on the earlier analysis to provide policy recommendations that strengthen and enhance defence cooperation, emphasising congruence and common security priorities. They also relate to improvements to the quality and substance of bilateral defence meetings, increased opportunities for Indian military personnel to participate in Australian professional military education courses, and improved military counter-terrorism cooperation. The enhancements would build on the positive defence relationship outcomes currently being achieved through improved Australia-India maritime security cooperation.

Policy recommendation 1. Strengthen and enhance defence cooperation, emphasising congruence and common security priorities

Policy rationale

Since the signing of the 2009 Australia-India Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, Australia has developed a number of inter-related policies that reinforce its shared security interests with India. These include the 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, the *Australian National Security Strategy 2013* and the 2013 *Defence White Paper*. Collectively, these policy papers have consistently identified a strategic environment that is witnessing a dramatic shift of economic and strategic weight into the Indo-Pacific region, which will dominate Australia’s future national security outlook.

India’s re-emergence as a regional power and its growing global influence, combined with its dominant location in the Indian Ocean, make it an important security partner for Australia. The 2013 *Defence White Paper* contends that the Australia-India defence relationship is progressing well, saying that:

India and Australia have a shared interest in helping to address the strategic changes that are occurring in the region.... Australia and India are taking further steps to develop and expand upon the Strategic Partnership, under the framework of the 2009 *Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation*. Strategic engagement between Australia and India has involved high-level visits and ongoing exchanges and dialogue, and defence cooperation occurs across a range of activities, including ship visits and professional exchanges. Our Navy-to-Navy relationship continues to grow—a natural progression given our shared maritime security interests as

Indian Ocean littoral states—and Australia and India will work towards establishing a formal bilateral maritime exercise.⁸⁴

Military diplomacy does not produce dramatic, demonstrable improvements to relationships in the short term, especially with countries such as India.⁸⁵ Instead, it relies on the trust gained through medium- to long-term investment in the relationship, including meaningful activities and person-to-person relationships. The current status of the relationship is exemplified by the fact that the June 2013 visit to Canberra by India's Defence Minister A.K. Antony was the first ever visit to Canberra by an Indian Defence Minister. Therefore, Australia will need to take an incremental approach to enhance the Australia–India defence relationship.

Current status of the Australia-India defence relationship

The evolving Australia-India defence relationship has been based on the areas identified in the 2009 Joint Declaration of Security Cooperation. This joint declaration established the framework for security cooperation between Australia and India, with the specific areas for defence cooperation including the formalisation of regular defence policy talks (at the senior officials' level), staff talks, Service-to-Service exchanges, and participation in exercises.⁸⁶ It also reinforced the continuation of regular joint working groups on maritime security and counter-terrorism.⁸⁷ Australia formally reinforced the requirement to further develop and expand on the defence relationship with India in the *2013 Defence White Paper*, as highlighted above.

Furthermore, the requirement to continue to enhance the Australia-India defence relationship was a key outcome of the June 2013 Ministerial discussions between Indian Defence Minister Antony and Australian Defence Minister Smith in Perth. During the visit, Minister Antony and Minister Smith specifically agreed to continue regular bilateral Defence Minister's meetings, defence policy talks and Armed Forces staff talks; continue bilateral cooperation through Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean multilateral fora; continue to build people-to-people links through training and education exchanges; and work towards a bilateral maritime exercise from 2015.⁸⁸

Most recently, this requirement was jointly reinforced during Prime Minister Abbott's visit to India in September 2014, during which both Prime Ministers 'committed to strengthening the defence and security partnership' and 'called for deepening the framework of defence and security cooperation to guide the bilateral engagement'.⁸⁹

However, despite the assurances and agreements by politicians, the defence relationship remains largely constrained to 'soft security and dialogues'.⁹⁰ While there are generally effective relationships between the respective Service Chiefs, the assessment from several commentators is that the dialogues lack any real substance and that 'engagement at the operational or tactical level remains extremely thin'.⁹¹ However, despite these observations, there are signs that the Australian Navy-Indian Navy relationship continues to improve.

Maritime security cooperation between Australia and India has been identified by Australian defence officials as the highest priority for the defence relationship.⁹² During 2013 and 2014, for example, this included a number of ship visits and passage exercises—HMAS *Darwin* visited Kochi in February 2014 for a port visit and passage exercise, and the INS *Sahyadri* conducted a port visit to Darwin in June 2014, as well as earlier participating in the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) International Fleet Review in Sydney in October 2013.

The RAN also participated in India's biennial 'MILAN' Maritime exercise in the Bay of Bengal in March 2014. The two navies also maintain a reciprocal training position in each country to improve people-to-people links, and Navy Staff Talks in June 2014 identified the potential for further exercise activity, including in specialist fields such as unexploded ordnance.

The improving maritime security cooperation is further reinforced by the engagement occurring within the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). This multilateral maritime security initiative was established under Indian leadership in 2008 and seeks to increase cooperation among the navies of the Indian Ocean littoral states by providing an open and inclusive forum to 'enhance

safety and security, to share knowledge, and to support disaster relief and humanitarian assistance'.⁹³

The RAN assumed chairmanship of IONS for 2014-15, with Australia's Chief of Navy successfully hosting the fourth IONS in Perth in late March 2014. Furthermore, preparations are well advanced for the inaugural Australia-India bilateral maritime exercise to be conducted in 2015. As a consequence, it is assessed that the relationship between the Australian and Indian navies is progressing in the right direction with robust linkages being established and a plan to further enhance the relationship in the coming years. However, the depth of the Navy-to-Navy relationship has not yet been reflected in the bilateral relationships between the other branches of the military.

The Army-to-Army relationship continues to be modest.⁹⁴ The bulk of the engagement is focused at the senior officer level, with virtually no engagement at the operational or tactical level. In September 2013, Australia hosted a visit by India's Chief of Army Staff. During the visit, the Australian Chief of Army and India's Chief of Army Staff discussed the progression of a number of practical engagement initiatives to strengthen the relationship. This included reciprocal senior guest speaker visits and potential subject-matter expert exchanges in counter-improvised explosive device technology.

The biennial Australia-India Army Staff Talks in August 2014 also agreed in-principle to establish a bilateral Army exercise; to consider joint logistical training for operations in remote locations; and to consider the establishment of a one-year Indian Officer instructor posting to the Royal Military College, Duntroon. Furthermore, India is seeking an opportunity for its special forces, specifically its National Security Guard, to conduct a visit to Special Operations Command-Australia in 2015.⁹⁵ While these developments are very encouraging, there clearly is scope for further long-term investment in the relationship.

The Australia-India Air Force-to-Air Force relationship continues to be embryonic but has the potential to be strong.⁹⁶ Australia and India share a number of common Air Force platforms, specifically the C-17 Globemaster, C-130J Hercules, P3 Orion and the incoming P8 Poseidon, which is operated as the P8I Neptune by the Indian Air Force. These common platform engagements should enable the Air Force relationship to be enhanced via common platform engagements, sharing of maintenance knowledge and information sharing for aviation safety.

To date, however, the Air Force-to-Air Force relationship has largely been constrained to senior officer visits. Australia's Chief of Air Force most recently visited India in December 2012. Over the last decade, the Royal Australian Air Force has attempted to progress this relationship by regularly inviting the Indian Air Force to attend the annual Exercise KAKADU, which would be particularly relevant to India's maritime surveillance capabilities, however India's attendance has been infrequent. During the last Air Force Staff Talks in late 2012, there were discussions regarding potential opportunities for future engagement, including training, doctrine, aviation safety and common platform engagement, which presumably are being progressed.

The other component of the defence relationship that needs further development is the relationship between the public servants of the Australian and Indian Departments of Defence.⁹⁷ Australian Defence officials have indicated that to facilitate Indian bureaucratic support for establishing a more effective defence relationship there is a need for Australia to improve its ties with the Indian civilian defence bureaucracy, which closely manages India's defence engagement. However, India's defence engagement staff has limited capacity to significantly increase their current level of activity, understandably focusing their effort on higher priority relationships, such as with the US, which unfortunately can be at the expense of the Australian relationship.⁹⁸

Given the numerous challenges to the enhancement of the Australia-India defence relationship, it is generally agreed that Australia needs to approach the development of its defence relationship with India as a continuous and consistent long-term effort.⁹⁹ The current status of the relationship also indicates that Australia needs to patiently focus on engagement activities that emphasise congruence and common security priorities. A good example is shared maritime security interests in the Indian Ocean, where patient engagement has built rapport and

significantly influenced the successful progression of the Australia-India Navy-to-Navy relationship.

Policy overview

Australia needs to recognise in its international defence policy for India that the burden of strengthening the relationship with India resides primarily with Australia. Apart from the maritime security aspect of the relationship, there is little imperative within the Indian bureaucracy to prioritise the establishment of a comprehensive and constructive defence relationship with Australia. Moreover, Australia also needs to recognise that the limited capacity of the Indian defence bureaucracy—including the pressure on their staff to service the increasing level of international engagement being undertaken by the Indian military—is a constraint on the broadening of the relationship.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Australia needs to take a measured and incremental approach to enhancing the relationship.

Meaningful interaction is an essential component of this approach, with Australia patiently persisting in engaging India at the government level, Service Chief level and through think tanks, including via the nascent 1.5 track defence strategic dialogue, on congruent security interests. Consequently, Australia should seek to gradually expand this dialogue beyond maritime security to include other areas of converging interest such as, but not exclusive to, the military contribution to counter-terrorism.

Meaningful interaction across the broader converging areas of interest is a mechanism that Australia can utilise to provide consistent assurances to India to build trust, remove suspicions of Australia's intent and deepen the understanding in India of the importance of Australia's and India's strategic convergence. Furthermore, Australia should also work to improve the people-to-people links at the operational and tactical level. Australia should take lessons from its experience in building robust people-to-people links with the Indonesian military over the last three decades to inform the development of improved linkages with the Indian military and their Department of Defence.

Initiative 1.1. Improve the quality and substance of bilateral defence meetings

One avenue would be to improve the quality and substance of bilateral defence meetings in order to enable more complex defence collaboration. Apart from the maritime security-related bilateral meetings, most meetings lack substance, and officials generally lack the authority to approve initiatives developed within these meetings. Furthermore, there have been instances where the implementation of initiatives thought to have been previously agreed is subsequently delayed or blocked.¹⁰¹ Consequently, a number of bilateral meetings now contain agenda items with outcomes approved in advance, thereby undermining any meaningful exploration or discussion of important issues. This informs a perception that there is no real exchange of genuine ideas or opinions, which creates an impersonal atmosphere within these bilateral meetings.

This policy initiative suggests that bilateral meetings between senior Australian and Indian defence officers and officials need to become less output driven and more conversational. Such an approach would facilitate the building of rapport and enable a better understanding of each other's perspective, providing the opportunity in the medium term for more productive discussions on issues that require more substantive outcomes. This would not be easy to implement as both parties would need first to agree that there is a problem to be resolved. Moreover, at present, the current system of managing bilateral defence meetings would seem to be working sufficiently well to provide both parties with a reasonable degree of confidence that

their strategic interactions are producing suitable outcomes at this stage of their defence relationship.¹⁰²

However, as the Australia-India defence relationship progresses, there needs to be an effort to incrementally change the way that senior level meetings are conducted. This could include investing more time in producing agendas and meeting structures that better facilitate the sharing of ideas through genuine discussions. This would require both sides taking the risk of reducing the tight bureaucratic controls on their official dialogue and providing the appropriate authority to their senior representatives to contribute in a genuine manner. It is accepted that this would take time to implement. Nevertheless, the positive progress being made within the Australia-India Navy-to-Navy relationship—including within the IONS forum—provides an example of how genuine discussions and opportunities for improved consultation could improve the overall defence relationship.

Initiative 1.2. Increase opportunities for Indian military personnel and Ministry of Defence civil servants to attend Australian professional military education courses

The establishment of robust people-to-people linkages is critical to strengthening defence cooperation. Australia has been successful in utilising the provision of professional military education courses as a tool to improve people-to-people linkages with regional militaries. This has been exemplified by the robust defence relationship between Australia and Indonesia, which is heavily influenced by the deep people-to-people linkages between the two militaries. These linkages have been underpinned by the longstanding professional military education courses that Australia has offered to and have been taken up by Indonesia. In 2013, this comprised some 150 positions.¹⁰³

Moreover, this program has enabled the establishment of the Indonesia-Australia Defence Alumni which provides a conduit to sustain the people-to-people links established on professional military education courses. The Alumni also provides opportunities for the development of further people-to-people linkages, such as the Alumni-sponsored program that 'invites the top fifteen graduates from the Indonesian Defense University and their Staff and Command Schools to Australia to familiarize themselves with the Australian military and culture'.¹⁰⁴

The people-to-people links established through the provision of professional military education courses and the Alumni have been so successful that the use of the relationships between senior Australian and Indonesian military officers—involving both active and retired officers—has been a useful diplomatic tool for the respective governments when addressing issues that may arise within the Australia-Indonesia strategic relationship.¹⁰⁵ As a consequence, the Australia-Indonesia experience provides a useful model for enhancing the Australia-India defence relationship, specifically the people-to-people links.

In contrast, Australia only provides limited opportunities for Indian defence personnel to attend Australian professional military education courses.¹⁰⁶ Currently, there are two positions allocated for Indian officers to attend courses at the Australian Defence College. Attendance is funded by Australia and offered on a rotational basis between the Indian Navy, Army and Air Force. One position is for a Major equivalent on the Australian Command and Staff College—out of 45 positions offered to foreign students—and one for a Colonel equivalent at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies—out of 23 positions offered to foreign students.

There is also a standing offer, not yet taken up, for India to send officer cadets to the Australian Defence Force Academy. The Australian and Indian Navies have also established a reciprocal

training position for mid-ranking officer training. Additionally, the most recent Australia-India Army Staff Talks agreed in-principle to consider the establishment of a one-year posting for an Indian officer as an instructor at the Royal Military College, Duntroon.

However, this modest program does not adequately support the establishment of useful people-to-people linkages or facilitate enhanced defence cooperation, especially considering the size of the Indian military.¹⁰⁷ Participation on professional military education courses has a positive impact on the participants and their country beyond the academic qualifications earned. Exposure to the ADF via professional military education would improve India's knowledge of Australian doctrine, operational and strategic planning processes, and military culture. That, in turn, would improve further opportunities for military-to-military interaction, information sharing, joint planning and bilateral exercises, any of which would contribute to the overall enhancement of defence cooperation.¹⁰⁸

As a consequence, it is recommended that Australia increases the number of positions allocated to India on its professional military education courses to include three positions on the Australian Command and Staff College and four positions on the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies course. That would enable a position to be offered to each of India's military services—Navy, Army and Air Force—on both courses, with the fourth position on the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies' course offered to India's Defence civil service.

Australia should also invite India to provide an instructor to the Australian Command and Staff College and reinforce the standing offer for India to send officer cadets to the Australian Defence Force Academy. In the medium term, Australia should seek India's agreement that these become reciprocal arrangements, albeit with Australian funding to expand this initiative. Should this initiative be implemented, Australia could in the medium term propose the establishment of an India-Australia Defence Alumni to serve a similar function to the Indonesia-Australia Defence Alumni. In time, the two Alumni could potentially be affiliated.

Policy resistance

India would understandably not want these initiatives to be perceived as being drawn into an alliance-like arrangement. It is also possible that the limited capacity of India's defence bureaucracy could preclude meaningful progress in the short term. Nonetheless, there is a need to seek India's agreement to incrementally implement measures that strengthen the defence relationship by improving the defence dialogue and increasing people-to-people linkages through increased participation in Australian professional military education courses. Improved defence dialogue would provide the platform to reassure India that Australia is not seeking an alliance but is seeking to strengthen the defence relationship. A key component of this reassurance would be consistent messaging and a reinforcement of the mutual benefits of the policy.

Furthermore, there may be some in the Australian and/or Indian bureaucracy who believe that the current substance and structure of the defence relationship is adequate. Any such belief could be countered by detailing the less-than-mature nature of the current defence relationship and the joint Prime Ministerial commitment in September 2014 to deepen the framework of defence cooperation. It could also be addressed by drawing on assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to seek India's Ministry of External Affairs support for improving the substance of these dialogues and gaining authority to increase Indian participation on Australian professional military education courses.

Key implementation actors

International Policy Division within the Department of Defence would likely be the lead agency in implementing these initiatives. It would need to work closely with the Service Chiefs and the Vice Chief of the Defence Force in the development and progress of these initiatives, at least in relation to the Australian Defence College components of the initiative. International Policy

Division would also need to seek assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to gain support for these enhancements from India's Ministry of External Affairs.

Resources

The implementation of the proposed policy initiatives would require an increase in the International Policy Division's budget and potentially an additional staff member within the South Asia Section of its Global Interests Branch. Currently, International Policy Division has budgeted some \$450,000 for engagement with India, which includes the funding for Indian students on Australian professional military education courses (but not Australian staffing costs). The proposed increase in positions on the Australian Defence College courses would also likely require a review of instructor staffing and other resources, and may have follow-on implications for accommodation/facilities and the overall number of students (both ADF and international).

It is anticipated that the India engagement budget would need to be increased by \$2-3 million to implement these initiatives. The reciprocal exchanges would require further resources, both money and staff, but the planning horizons for this component of the initiative provides sufficient time to develop a better understanding of the additional cost. While the proposed policy would be relatively expensive to implement, especially initiative 1.2, it is assessed that this investment has the potential to significantly enhance the relationship in the medium term.

Policy recommendation 2. Enhance military counter-terrorism cooperation

Policy rationale

The 2009 India-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation identified that India and Australia will cooperate in their 'efforts to combat terrorism'.¹⁰⁹ As a consequence, a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism has been established to enable '[b]ilateral consultation to promote counter-terrorism cooperation'.¹¹⁰ The Australian lead for this consultation has been the Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism, with support from the Attorney-General's Department—including the Australian Federal Police—and the Department of Defence.¹¹¹

The primary outcome of this working group has been improved information sharing and enhanced police-to-police assistance. This achievement was formally recognised by Australia and India during the 2014 visit to India by the Australian Prime Minister. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the defence component of this cooperation has progressed beyond the dialogue phase and senior officer visits.

Australia's 2013 *Defence White Paper* asserted that '[o]ver the last decade counter-terrorism cooperation has been a prominent element' of achieving the goals of Australia's international engagement.¹¹² Furthermore, the White Paper indicated that counter-terrorism cooperation has 'assisted Australia to build effective relationships with its close neighbours and the development of regional defence forces'.¹¹³ This should be no different in the Australia-India defence relationship.

The emergence of the terrorist group Islamic State and its subsequent stated threat against both Australia and India provides further motivation to improve Australia-India military counter-terrorism cooperation. However, current cooperation has been limited to senior officer visits, a small Australian Special Forces contingent conducting joint adventure training in the Himalayas with the Indian Army Special Forces, and small numbers of Australian Special Forces personnel undertaking the Indian Army Special Forces Mountain Warfare Course.¹¹⁴

There is little evidence to suggest that Special Operations Command-Australia and India's National Security Guard—the two organisations with primacy for military counter-terrorism response—have conducted any engagement beyond senior officer visits and low-level bilateral dialogue although, during the biennial Australia-India Army Staff Talks in August 2014, there reportedly was in-principle agreement to scope a counter-terrorism focused visit to Special Operations Command-Australia by India's National Security Guard in 2015.¹¹⁵

This policy initiative would fill a niche that other potential security partners could not, especially since the similarity in national approaches provides a logical platform for enhancing military counter-terrorism cooperation between Australia and India. Furthermore, this policy initiative would enable Australia and India to enhance their overall defence relationship in a manner that is unlikely to be misconstrued by China as a containment activity or counter to its interests.

Policy overview

Australia needs to further develop its military counter-terrorism cooperation with India by seeking to develop an improved relationship between Special Operations Command-Australia and India's National Security Guard. Australia and India share a common approach to the employment of their military in response to domestic terrorism. Both rely on other departments or agencies to lead the response to threats such as terrorism, reinforcing the primacy of the civil authorities, and only use their military to resolve terrorist incidents for *in-extremis* situations.¹¹⁶ However, both Australia and India have tasked their militaries, specifically Special Operations Command-Australia and the Special Action Group of India's National Security Guard to be capable and prepared to provide support to the civil authorities to prevent or respond to terrorist threats.¹¹⁷

Initiative 2.1. Increase dialogue, visits and exchanges between the Special Operations Commander-Australia and the Commander of India's National Security Guard

The appointment of a new Special Operations Commander-Australia in January 2015 provides an ideal opportunity for the relationship to be re-energised, prospectively using security arrangements for the 2018 Commonwealth Games (to be held in Australia) to seek deeper engagement with the Commander of India's National Security Guard. In particular, Australia could seek to learn lessons from the National Security Guard's support to the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi and its response to the Mumbai terrorist attacks of 2011.

Such an approach should provide for meaningful interaction and enable the two commanders to seek further cooperation at a level of engagement suited to both parties. Once again, Australia should draw from its lessons of engaging with the Indonesian military, in this case their special forces (Kopassus). Special Operations Command-Australia's patient approach of engaging Kopassus over many years has paid dividends, with the relationship developing incrementally into one of Australia's most important special forces relationship.¹¹⁸ To replicate this experience, Australia should offer India the opportunity for its special forces officers to attend professional military education courses in Australia.

Additionally, the outcomes of the 2012 review by the Naresh Chandra Task Force on India's National Security arrangements provide another opportunity for Commander Special Operations-Australia to engage with the Commander of India's National Security Guard. The Task Force identified the need for a unified Joint Special Operations Command in order to 'bring together the existing special forces of the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force and other relevant agencies under a unified command and control structure to execute strategic or politico-military operations in tune with India's national security objectives'.¹¹⁹ Australia could use the enhanced

dialogue between the two commanders to gain a better understanding of the implications of this proposed change and offer Australia's assistance in establishing this joint command arrangement should it be approved by the Indian Government.

Initiative 2.2. Conduct annual counter-terrorism workshops to exchange experience and knowledge

The hosting by Special Operations Command-Australia of annual counter-terrorism workshops with India's National Security Guard to exchange experience and knowledge would provide another opportunity to enhance military counter-terrorism cooperation. The workshops could be recommended during the previously-identified commanders' dialogue and initially be used as part of Special Operations Command-Australia's build-up training for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

They would provide an opportunity to develop people-to-people linkages at the mid-ranking levels of both organisations by exposing the Australian and Indian special forces personnel to each other on regular intervals. The workshops could also include other Australian agencies and departments involved in counter-terrorism response—especially during the build up for the 2018 Commonwealth Games—thereby providing a broader audience to share the experience of India's National Security Guard.

These workshops could also form the building block for more substantial engagement, such as training exchanges and inviting India's National Security Guard to provide observers for Special Operations Command-Australia's contribution to the 2018 Games. Participation in professionally-conducted workshops has a positive impact on participants and their respective units beyond the immediate lessons learnt.

Exposure to Special Operations Command-Australia would improve the understanding of India's National Security Guard in Australia's special operations doctrine, which has been contemporised during the last decade of war, as well as operational planning processes and culture. The workshops would also provide an opportunity to incrementally broaden the relationship between Special Operations Command-Australia and India's National Security Guard, and other elements of India's special operations community. Consequently, this policy initiative would be expected to incrementally contribute to the enhancement of the overall defence relationship.

Policy resistance

This initiative may face some resistance from within the Indian defence bureaucracy in the context of the relative priority given to enhancing the defence relationship with Australia. Enhanced military counter-terrorism cooperation, in particular, may be viewed as a new relationship that adds work to an already overloaded engagement agenda. However, any such resistance could be ameliorated by Australia initially funding the full cost of the enhanced engagement and incrementally implementing the policy over several years, with the aim of conducting the first counter-terrorism workshop in 2017.

There may also be some resistance from the Indian government departments that contribute to the National Security Guard, although this may change should India establish the proposed Joint Special Operations Command. There would also be a requirement to alleviate any concerns from the special operations communities in India and Australia, noting that they are both managing high levels of operational tempo. Furthermore, there may be some resistance at the unit level within Special Operations Command-Australia, because their experience has primarily been within the 'five-eyes' community of the US, UK, Canada and New Zealand.

As a consequence, there would be a need to clearly articulate how the investment of time and effort by Special Operations Command-Australia and India's National Security Guard would pay dividends in the medium term, both in terms of counter-terrorism cooperation and overall Australia-India defence cooperation. Additionally, a robust and convincing narrative that accurately reflects Australia's national interests and objectives in its relationship with India needs to be developed by Special Operations Command-Australia in order to ameliorate any concerns that might arise within the organisation.

There may also be some resistance from other Australian Government departments and agencies that are already contributing to Australia-India counter-terrorism cooperation. While this policy initiative would complement the work already been undertaken by other departments and agencies, there may be some resistance because of concerns that this initiative could undermine the cooperation already established or draw funding from their existing programs.

As a consequence, Defence would need to closely coordinate the implementation of this initiative with the Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism and the other departments and agencies involved in order to ensure that it does not undermine existing arrangements. To further ameliorate any such concerns, Defence would also need to demonstrate that this is a defence-related initiative that draws its funding from Defence's budget.

Key implementation actors

The Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism is the lead entity for developing and implementing Australia's international counter-terrorism efforts. This includes 'coordinating policy cooperation, capacity building and operational collaboration between Australian agencies and international counter-terrorism partners'.¹²⁰ Within the Department of Defence, the lead agency for implementing this policy initiative would be Special Operations Command-Australia with support from International Policy Division.

Special Operations Command-Australia would need to work closely with the Ambassador for Counter Terrorism to build a convincing narrative to influence India's participation, which could be achieved via the Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism. Furthermore, Special Operations Command-Australia would need to closely coordinate the implementation of this policy initiative with other Australian Government departments and agencies to ensure that it did not unintentionally undermine other Australia-India counter-terrorism cooperation initiatives. This would include coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Attorney-General's Department and the Australian Federal Police.

Resources

Although the initiative would require a modest increase in staff effort across a range of government departments and agencies, it could leverage from the staff effort already allocated to support the Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism. Within Defence, its development and implementation would most likely require an initial project team of one to two personnel within Special Operations Command-Australia. The team would provide continuity, especially important when coordinating with other government departments and agencies, and with the Indian defence bureaucracy. As the initiative shifted to a 'steady state' relationship, the workload could likely be absorbed into the existing international engagement staff of Special Operations Command-Australia.

In terms of funding, the existing Defence Cooperation Program budget allocation for India would likely need a modest increase from its current budget of around \$450,000 (for 2014-15). It is estimated that initiative 2.1 would require an increase of approximately \$8000 a year to enable Special Operations Commander-Australia to conduct at least annual counterpart visits to India's National Security Guard. Initiative 2.2 would likely require a modest increase to the budget, especially if Australia were to fund the full cost of annual counter-terrorism workshops, with the main element being the travel cost of Indian participants.

Conclusion

This policy paper has identified that, as a consequence of India's recent re-emergence as a regional power, there has been increased convergence in the strategic interests of Australia and India, which has provided particular impetus to influence the development of an enhanced defence relationship. These converging strategic interests are being shaped by the behaviour by China and the shared desire of Australia and India to maintain stability in the Indian Ocean region, as well as shared counter-terrorism concerns.

These converging strategic interests influenced the development of the Joint Declaration of Security Cooperation in 2009, which established the framework for security cooperation between the two countries. The requirement to improve security cooperation has been further reinforced as a result of a number of high-level meetings between India and Australia. This included the 2014 visit to India by the Prime Minister of Australia, during which both Prime Ministers committed to enhancing the Australia-India defence relationship.¹²¹

However, this paper has also argued that the enhancement of the defence relationship, as envisaged in the joint declaration and in subsequent high-level government announcements, is challenged by a certain asymmetry in security interests between the two countries. It includes differing strategic cultures, divergent views regarding China's intent in the Indian Ocean region, and differing perspectives of the role of defence relationships to further foreign policy aims. Despite these challenges, there is evidence that there are positive defence relationship outcomes being achieved, notably as part of the improving maritime security cooperation that is already occurring between the Australian and Indian navies.

The paper has proposed two key policy initiatives that would contribute to further enhancing Australia's defence relationship with India, with the end state of delivering a more substantive and constructive relationship. In the first instance, there is a need to incrementally implement measures that improve the level of substantive interactions within the relationship. This would include working from the 'top down', by improving the quality and substance of bilateral meetings, and by also addressing the relationship from the 'bottom-up', by improving people-to-people links.

The paper has argued that a medium- to long-term policy that would have the most significant impact on enhancing people-to-people links would be an initiative to increase the opportunity for Indian military personnel and civil servants to attend Australian professional military education courses. The resultant improvements in people-to-people links should enhance the relationship in a similar way to the successful program that Australia has implemented with Indonesia. Such an initiative would expand the Indian military's knowledge of the Australian military, thereby providing more substance to the relationship by improving opportunities for military-military interaction, information sharing and joint planning, all of which would help enhance overall defence cooperation.

Improving Australia-India military counter-terrorism cooperation would provide another opportunity to add more substance to the defence relationship. India has expressed an interest in improving its military counter-terrorism cooperation with Australia, demonstrated by the mutual agreement to scope a counter-terrorism focused visit to Special Operations Command-Australia by India's National Security Guard in 2015. Such a visit would provide the opportunity for Special Operations Command-Australia to further develop the relationship by first increasing the dialogue between Special Operations Commander-Australia and the Commander of India's National Security Guard.

It would also provide the opportunity to seek agreement from India to conduct annual military counter-terrorism workshops to exchange experience and knowledge, utilising the upcoming 2018 Commonwealth Games in Australia as the catalyst for enhancing the relationship. Subsequently, this initiative would provide an opportunity for Special Operations Command-Australia to incrementally broaden its relationship with India's National Security Guard and

other elements of India's special operations community, thereby contributing to a more substantive and constructive defence relationship with India.

These policy initiatives would provide opportunities to enhance the Australia-India defence relationship by providing measures that complement the positive effects gained from the maturing maritime security cooperation between the two countries. However, the paper has also concluded that Australia will need to demonstrate patience in developing this relationship as it did when developing the Australia-Indonesia defence relationship.

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