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**INTEREST**

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# Europe's Choices, America's Interests

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### Here's Looking at Us

From the start *The American Interest* has been about domestic politics and culture as well as foreign policy and national security. The reason is that we never accepted the isolation of these zones from each other. “Best practice” social science would not let us, even if disciplinary boundaries in academia often spited that best practice. Maybe that’s what John F. Kennedy meant when he (or probably Ted Sorensen) noted: “The dividing line between domestic and foreign affairs has become as distinct as a line drawn in water. All that happens to us abroad has a direct and intimate bearing on what we can and must do at home,” and, of course, what we do to ourselves at home resounds around the globe in one way or another.

In consequence, *TAI* has sought out and published over the years a relatively large number of “big think,” boundary-straddling essays. Otherwise, the balance from issue to issue has varied depending on what challenges we thought begged immediate attention. Even before the Great Recession of 2007–08 we were increasingly turning our attention more toward domestic political and cultural subjects, not just because the mayhem caused by the Iraq War had begun to subside, but because we developed this nagging sense that conditions at home that we had taken for granted as being at least “good enough for government work” perhaps were not.

By this past November, when Donald Trump was elected President, it had become clear to most of us that things had become seriously deranged—since Trump’s election was a symptom of some very deep-seated problems in American political culture and, very likely, in the general culture in which it nests. That is why I have been arguing ever since that as endlessly fascinating as our President is from a clinical point of view, his person is the wrong focus; the focus should be on how such a vulgar, mean-spirited ignoramus could get elected to the land’s highest office in the first place.

After the election several friends assured me that Trump could not do all that much damage to the Republic because American institutions were strong and would constrain him. It seemed to me wiser to examine that premise than to assume it. Consequently, looking ahead, *TAI* will focus more than ever on the analysis of the institutional health of the nation. We will still devote space to foreign policy and to our “high” political institutions—Congress, the Supreme Court, electoral reform, and so on—but we will concentrate on the generative institutions below the obvious political line of sight.

We count 13 such institutions: our legal/justice system, including police and prisons; religion; family/marriage; the military; the Civil Service; banking and finance; labor and jobs, including immigration; basic education and training; higher education, including the R&D function; infrastructure, including energy; media and publishing; medicine; and agriculture and husbandry, including nutrition. Obviously, many of these institutions overlap in practice, and some subjects—environment, for example—are spread among several categories as well. In all 13 domains we hope to present master overview analyses as well as essays on more specific challenges within the general rubric. When possible, authors will be practically minded and urge consideration of actionable reform propositions.

How long will this inventory and analysis go on as a *TAI* concentration? For as long as it takes, and, as always, *TAI* cares not a fig for ideological labels: We have always taken an evidence-based, problem-solving approach to public policy issues, and that will not change. This is no time for partisan parsings; we have more than enough of that already. 🌐

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Managing Afghanistan and Pakistan will be no picnic as Islamist threats and China loom, though successes are possible. India could be a promising partner, but U.S. policy requires skillful handling.

# The South Asian Vortex

*Daniel Markey*

**D**uring the post-9/11 era, U.S. policy in South Asia has served as a nearly perfect illustration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's old line, "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important." On the whole, Washington has lavished less attention and fewer resources on India, the most populous nation in the region and the state with the greatest potential to shape global geopolitics over the long run, than on neighboring Pakistan. In turn, U.S. officials have tended to treat Pakistan, with its 200 million people and impossibly frustrating bundle of policy challenges, as an irritating appendage of the U.S. war in Afghanistan. And even to Afghanistan the U.S. government has rarely devoted sufficient or sustained policy focus. The Bush Administration shortchanged it in favor of war in Iraq, and the Obama Administration's surge was shaped more by U.S. domestic political considerations than by Afghanistan's own realities or trajectory.

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**Daniel Markey** is a senior research professor in international relations and the academic director of the Global Policy Program at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He is currently writing a book about the geopolitics of the increasing Chinese influence in western Asia.

A smarter strategy for South Asia would offer realistic avenues for the United States to maintain a balance of power in favor of American interests—chief among them a liberal world order—over the long haul, not just to neutralize immediate security threats. To its credit, by the time the Obama Administration departed it appeared to appreciate the long-standing imbalance, especially with respect to India. The most that could be said of U.S. efforts in Pakistan and Afghanistan, however, is that the Obama Administration bequeathed to its successor a slow-motion train wreck rather than an immediate crisis.

## Threats and Opportunities

**T**he upside-down quality to U.S. policy in South Asia owes much to the fact that Washington has based major decisions on threats more than on opportunities. President Trump took a similar approach when he unveiled his "South Asia strategy" in a primetime television address on August 21, 2017. His speech was first and foremost a declaration that the United States would not lose in Afghanistan. Then the President waved at Pakistan and India. He threatened the former with the back

of his hand, warning that Islamabad had better end its support of Afghan insurgents, or else. He offered a more welcoming open hand to New Delhi, suggesting that India should take a more active role in Afghanistan, especially in promoting economic development.

Trump is not alone in taking an Afghanistan-first approach to the region. Bush and Obama mainly did the same, and it is easy to see why. In Afghanistan, Presidents Bush, Obama, and now Trump have had to consider the realistic possibility of defeat in what now qualifies as America's longest war. That disastrous political prospect, perhaps more than the potential security threat posed by a reconstituted al-Qaeda (or similar terrorist network), explains a lot about the policy decisions reached by all three Presidents.

In Pakistan too, concerns about imminent threats tend to dominate American policy calculations. Pakistan's role as a spoiler of regional peace, safe haven for terrorists, and nuclear-armed garrison state has demanded significant attention from U.S. national-security policymakers. Potential opportunities, such as Pakistan's expanding market for U.S. goods or investments, have generated far less American interest. Even Pakistan's vast, youthful population looks like a threat—a "youth bulge" that will bring greater volatility, extremism, and violence—rather than an opportunity for higher productivity and growth.

Only in India do opportunities outweigh threats, at least from Washington's point of view. It is worth pausing to recall that if not for 9/11, India would have eclipsed Pakistan and Afghanistan on America's strategic agenda. Toward the end of its tenure the Clinton Administration started to appreciate India's global potential in economic and diplomatic terms. The early Bush Administration appreciated India's geostrategic heft as an Asian counterbalance to a rising China. By contrast, if not for Osama bin Laden, Afghanistan would have remained a small, landlocked, war-torn tragedy, but not one of great strategic consequence to the United States. Pakistan, buffeted by internal turmoil and addicted to self-destructive hostility with India, would have concerned American policymakers, but wouldn't have led to expenditures of tens of

billions of dollars in military and economic assistance or rekindled efforts at diplomatic and intelligence cooperation, which had largely fallen apart a decade before.

In short, India holds the greatest opportunity for the United States, Pakistan poses the greatest potential security threat, and Afghanistan is where U.S. forces will be stuck in an interminable war unless someone figures out how to exit a no-win investment trap without causing undue political damage at home.

## Continuity and Change

For analysts who have followed South Asia over decades, too much about our present condition looks familiar and predictable. Had one fallen asleep in 1997 and woken up twenty years later, a number of assumptions, frameworks, and conclusions would still ring true.

Afghanistan's war is America's longest, but even the past 16 years since 9/11 are in many ways only the most recent chapter of a civil war that is about two decades older than the average Afghan alive today. Divisions within Afghan society—rural versus urban, tribe versus tribe, or ethnic group versus ethnic group—continue to stymie national political cooperation, a problem worsened by the corruption and institutional weaknesses of Kabul, and also by a political model imported via Bonn that asks the center to do more than it is able.

Similarly, Pakistan's present condition, including political disputes between the army and civilian politicians and a culture of abiding hostility toward India, has been constant throughout nearly all of the state's seventy-year history. The Pakistani state continues, as it has since at least the 1960s, to "do less with more" when it comes to making effective use of national resources in ways that contribute to basic socio-economic wellbeing, whether in terms of education, health care, or infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> At

<sup>1</sup>William Easterly, "The Political Economy of Growth without Development: A Case Study of Pakistan," paper for the Analytical Narratives of Growth Project, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (June 2001).

the same time, it invests heavily in the tools of war, including a growing nuclear weapons program, largely aimed at India. Not even the present instance of mutual U.S.-Pakistan frustration is especially new, as neither side has been satisfied with the other since their first treaty alliance in 1954.

India is still in many ways a slow-moving, parochial behemoth. It is preoccupied with its own domestic dramas in ways that distract it from international action, too riven by domestic politics to implement the sweeping reforms needed to unleash the potential of its own people, and too zealously post-colonial and ambitious to enter binding international alliances.

These important points of South Asian continuity notwithstanding, today's policy analysts must pay close attention to several changes. These new variables will help determine the region's demographic, socio-economic, and geopolitical trajectories. By studying them, American policymakers can gain insights into the most effective way for the United States to bring about other changes. In short, Washington will generally find itself on firmer ground when its strategies align with prevailing trends and when it seeks to promote changes in areas where flux has been a more frequent feature of recent history.

The first change to appreciate about South Asia is its demographic reality. In 1997, Afghanistan's population was 18 million, Pakistan's 129 million, and India's 997 million. Today those numbers are roughly 35 million, 193 million, and 1.3 billion, respectively. The region's cities have undergone the greatest and most rapid change, with Kabul growing from one to four million, Karachi from ten million to 16 million, and Mumbai from 16 to 21 million since about the turn of the century. And the region's median age is still only 27 years, meaning that growth rates are unlikely to come down anytime soon. India's population is projected to outgrow that of China by 2024. The most basic consequence of this growth is that it will make the region's traditional

scarcities—land, water, jobs, health care, and so on—even scarcer. Without improved governance, education, and infrastructure (perhaps aided by some breakthrough technologies), South Asia's young populations will have little chance of competing in the global economy. Politics will also become more contentious and violent.

The second shared reality across the region is that of China's increasing prominence. Some of this growth can be interpreted as a fairly straight-line projection of longstanding trends. India, for example, fought a disastrous war with China in 1962, and in 1998 justified its surprise nuclear tests by citing the security threat posed by nuclear-armed China. In recent years, India's suspicion of China has hardened, especially as both sides have invested in

## India's population is projected to outgrow that of China by 2024.

a wide range of military capabilities. Pakistan, for its part, has viewed China as its all-weather ally since the 1960s, and so Beijing's continued security cooperation with Islamabad—which has included the sale of sensitive technologies like missiles and nuclear warhead designs—represents a continuation of old patterns. Even in Afghanistan, China has for decades pressed its own limited policy aims, including helping to arm the *mujaheddin* in the 1980s and buying the massive Aynak copper mine in 2007.

In other ways, however, the ongoing evolution of China's regional role is more dramatic. Recent India-China standoffs along their disputed borders, maritime spats, and diplomatic differences paint a picture of an increasingly contentious relationship. India fears China's growing military presence throughout the Indian Ocean, perceives Chinese overtures to neighboring Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan as a part of a strategy of encirclement, and rejects Beijing's benign characterization of President Xi Jinping's "Belt and



Road Initiatives.” The stakes of this regional relationship have also grown exponentially. Far more than in 1962, a violent conflict between India and China would roil international markets and force other states—including the United States—into the uncomfortable position of having to take sides. Americans are not used to thinking in these terms about India (and may have forgotten how to think in such terms about Korea or Japan), but we may be forced to learn.

China’s role in Pakistan took a great leap forward with the 2015 inauguration of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a package of transportation infrastructure (roads, ports, trains), energy, and other industrial investments that could run into the tens of billions of dollars over the next decade. It is not remotely clear whether these investments will pan out, or even what fraction of China’s promises will be realized, but it is clear that China has decided to get involved in Pakistan in a new, qualitatively different way. It is also clear that Pakistan’s leaders perceive China as a sort of “last chance” foreign patron. Enthusiasm for CPEC is mutual, pervasive, and supported by both states, which launched the endeavor with heavy propaganda and some muzzling of even limited political opposition. Whether CPEC will ultimately help to stabilize Pakistan’s internal situation is an open question. The pathway from infrastructure investments to domestic tranquility is hardly straightforward. Similarly, CPEC (and more generally, China’s support to Pakistan) could cut either way with respect to mitigating or exacerbating Pakistan’s hostile relationship with India.

Finally, China took on an unprecedented new diplomatic role in Afghanistan when it agreed to participate in the “Quadrilateral Coordinating Group” during the latter years of the Obama Administration. That role never produced the Administration’s desired result, namely pressuring Pakistan to deliver recalcitrant factions of the Taliban to the negotiating table. Nevertheless, it marked a breakthrough in China’s willingness to step out of the shadows and take on greater diplomatic responsibility. More to the point it suggested a new reality in South Asia: Looking ahead, the United

States will need to take China’s role and interests into account in ways that were unnecessary even just a decade ago.

The other major regional changes are the consequence of specific domestic developments within India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. India may be relatively slow to change, but its economy has picked up steam in ways that will make additional reforms at home possible, and allow it to assume a greater international role as well. India’s economic growth holds great appeal for the United States, but leaves open essential questions about how Americans might best benefit from it. Equally important are changes in India’s national politics, encapsulated in the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which represents not merely the historic collapse of the Indian National Congress Party but the rise of a new and charismatic right-of-center force, willing to part ways with some of the orthodoxy that has characterized Indian politics since independence. In the international context, Modi—like Shinzo Abe in Japan—has distinguished himself by a less moralizing and more muscular tone, especially in his dealings with Pakistan and China.

Pakistan’s most significant domestic change of the past decade is undoubtedly its internal war against Islamist militant groups. Until the mid-2000s, Pakistani leaders generally refused to accept the necessity of serious military campaigns against groups they characterized as mere “miscreants” along the Afghan border. Since 2007, however, the Pakistani army has been engaged in nearly constant battles against homegrown Pakistani Taliban and their sympathizers. Terrorist violence has repeatedly spilled into Pakistan’s major urban centers, and all told, Pakistani officials count more than 70,000 lives and \$100 billion lost since 2001 due to the conflict. Unfortunately, although the current generation of Pakistani soldiers has seen more action against jihadi militants than against India, the state has done precious little to address the socio-economic wellsprings of violent extremism or to curb anti-Indian sentiment in ways that would encourage peace over the long run.

Afghanistan’s situation has also evolved significantly, if not yet in ways that are self-sustaining. Afghans have participated in several

national democratic elections, and their army of over 180,000 troops now bears the brunt of fighting against Taliban insurgents. Although most Afghans have only known war, a majority cannot now recall a time before the American intervention that routed the Taliban from Kabul.

Nor can they remember a time before cell phones. Afghanistan has experienced a revolution in communications; 75 percent of Afghans have cellular service subscriptions. Afghanistan remains precarious—politically, economically, and militarily—but its troubles should not be interpreted as evidence of pro-Taliban or obscurantist sentiment. Indeed, in 2016, 93 percent of Afghans reported that they would fear encountering the Taliban. Strikingly, 81 percent of Afghans believe men and women should have equal educational opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

## Myths of South Asia

**B**eyond these changes, policy analysts should also resist the allure of several popular “myths” about South Asia that have become common knowledge but really have little basis in fact. First, although it is fortunate that most American policymakers have dispensed with images of India as a land of cows and snake charmers, it is equally fanciful to believe that India has magically transformed into an enormous Silicon Valley. Yes, India has high-tech Bangalore and glitzy Bollywood, but roughly one in five Indians lives on less than \$1.90 per day, and 53 percent of Indian homes lack toilets. The point is not to make light of India’s progress or potential, but only to appreciate its scale and complexity.

Second, it is only a myth that Kashmir is the reason for all of South Asia’s troubles. As a policy corollary, attempting to settle the dispute over Kashmir should not be a top American priority. Kashmir is better understood as a symptom of the broader India-Pakistan conflict. Kashmir is also, to be clear, a bundle of unresolved political disputes between local communities of the former princely states of Jammu and Kashmir and the countries in which they now reside. Hypothetically, one

could remove Kashmir from the regional equation without seeing any improvement in relations between Islamabad and New Delhi. All of this is important because Pakistan frequently argues to ill-informed American audiences that the only way to make progress on peace in the region is to resolve the underlying dispute, by which they mean Kashmir. This is a ruse intended to focus U.S. pressure on India and turn attention away from Pakistan’s continued support for terrorists and militant organizations like Lashkar-e-Taiba, whose atrocities routinely threaten to spark Indo-Pakistani war.

Third, earnest supporters of liberal democracy frequently blame Pakistan’s military for its society’s ills. If not for its nefarious army and ISI, they suggest, Pakistan would find its way to peace and prosperity, not to mention better relations with the United States and India. This statement may be plausible on its face, but the truth is not nearly so simple. In reality, the civilian politicians of Pakistan are members of an elite “establishment” that is either thoroughly co-opted by the military or at least rather easily cowed into submission. Yes, there are factions within, and some prominent civilians are true democrats to the core, but none has—or is likely to have in the foreseeable future—sufficient desire or capacity to send the army back to the barracks and impose civilian authority over defense and foreign policy. It is best for American policymakers to deal with Pakistan as it is, to appreciate that a desired democratic transformation will take time to consolidate if it is to happen at all, and to appreciate the limits of U.S. influence over Pakistan’s domestic politics.

Fourth, Afghans are not fighting to break up their country into ethnically pure smaller states. Afghanistan, despite all its internal conflicts, is an actual nation-state, in some ways more so than Pakistan (or the United States, for that matter). Afghans fight to control their state, not to cut it into pieces. Partition is not a serious option, only a magic bullet-style policy proposal that distracts from a far more challenging reality. That said, as already noted in passing, Afghanistan’s geography, diversity,

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<sup>2</sup>“Afghanistan in 2016: A Survey of the People,” The Asia Foundation, December 7, 2016.

and political differences probably render it a state better ruled through mechanisms of loose federalism than the highly centralized structures enshrined in its current constitution.

## U.S. Policy, Real and Recommended

To be fair, in its waning days the Obama Administration attempted to reconfigure its approach to South Asia in ways that would better align U.S. resources—including the time and attention of senior policymakers—with opportunities and interests. This effort yielded broad shifts in policy for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, none of which was fully consummated by January 2017.

President Obama entered the White House in 2009 proclaiming Afghanistan a “war of necessity.” An extended policy review resulted in an 18-month “surge” of force. He reversed the surge in 2012 and announced plans to shift security responsibilities to Afghan forces by 2014. At that point, he declared that only a small embassy protection force would be in place by the end of his term.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the President’s timetables were politically motivated, a point that has been reiterated by his opponents ever since, including by some top officials within the Trump Administration. To the extent that President Obama’s decision to withdraw was justified by conditions on the ground, the relevant question for the President appears to have been whether the security threats posed by Afghanistan in the new era of ISIS justified an extensive U.S. military presence. He and his top advisers judged that they did not.

Yet Obama did not close out the Afghan war on his watch for three main reasons. First, the Taliban were making gains on the battlefield and a complete—or near complete—U.S. departure could lead to even more dramatic reversals, possibly including the collapse of the government in Kabul. Second, unlike the Hamid Karzai government, with which Obama had had an extremely contentious relationship, the new Ashraf Ghani-led government of national unity was a more willing partner

that plainly wanted the United States to stay and help its cause. And third, Obama believed that Hillary Clinton would inherit the mess in Afghanistan after him and that she preferred a long-term commitment in support of the Afghan state, if not necessarily any serious expansion of the U.S. war effort.

The Trump Administration has announced plans to increase U.S. forces in Afghanistan, but only by roughly four thousand, taking the total to between 13,000 and 16,000. In addition, U.S. troops are expected to be less restricted in their use of force, as demonstrated in April 2017 when they dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb in the U.S. arsenal—a MOAB, successor to the Daisy Cutter—on an underground tunnel complex in eastern Afghanistan. Still, no realistic escalation of the U.S. military effort has any chance of “winning” against a Taliban insurgency that proved its capacity to stand firm even against 100,000 U.S. forces. In a moment of candor not evident in President Trump’s speeches, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson acknowledged that the United States may not win a battlefield victory—adding, however, that neither will the Taliban.

The Trump strategy for Afghanistan is defensible only if the intensification of U.S. military effort is harnessed to severely circumscribed security and political ends. On the security front, the Administration should aim to retain a partnership with the national government in Kabul as a means to achieving the intelligence and access required to attack ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other international terrorist operations inside Afghanistan. On the political front, the U.S. goal should be a ceasefire, and in time, a settlement with the Taliban.

If a U.S. force of fewer than 20,000 can stave off the collapse of the Afghan government without heavy losses, enable effective counterterrorism operations, and gradually wear down the confidence of the insurgency enough to open talks, the Trump Administration could sustain similar troop levels in Afghanistan indefinitely. Given the realistic alternatives, that outcome would even qualify as a win and a smarter allocation of U.S. resources than either Obama’s initial surge or his planned departure.

However, serious Taliban talks cannot happen without a strong diplomatic initiative to complement the military one. That initiative would simultaneously work to identify opportunities within Afghanistan (between the Taliban and Kabul government), and to strengthen the supporting framework from without (by neutralizing potential spoilers like Iran and Pakistan and working with potential guarantors like China). Unfortunately, Secretary Tillerson's present dismantling of the State Department raises doubts about America's capacity to lead a robust diplomatic initiative. But that could change.

Returning to Pakistan, the Obama Administration experienced a similar initial surge of enthusiasm followed by stalemate, frustration, and a narrowing of ambition. The Holbrooke-era scheme for transforming the U.S.-Pakistan relationship from a transactional one to something more akin to a genuine partnership led to expenditures of tens of billions of dollars in civilian and military assistance that in retrospect were either too generous or too short-lived to achieve their aims. The Abbottabad raid on Osama bin Laden's compound in May 2011 encapsulated the essential problem, at least from Washington's point of view: Pakistan was a profoundly untrustworthy ally, and not just with respect to Afghanistan. For several years before the end of Obama's term, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship ran on fumes. The Administration avoided drama with Islamabad and let the clock run down, again likely assuming that an incoming President Clinton would prefer the flexibility to formulate her own Pakistan policies.

In his first major move regarding Pakistan, President Trump took a harsh stance clearly intended to compel Islamabad to cease its support of militant and terrorist groups like the Haqqani network in Afghanistan. In many ways, this was a shrewd and timely move. Trump is just unpredictable enough that adversaries have to

take his coercive threats—even risky ones—seriously. Moreover, U.S. patience for Pakistan's ties with anti-Afghan, anti-Indian, and anti-Western terrorist groups has run out, so truth-telling by the White House was in order. Without a Pakistani course correction, sooner or later the U.S.-Pakistan relationship would reach a breaking point, even though that rupture would be costly for both sides.

The question now is whether a coercive approach to Pakistan can work. The answer is a qualified yes. Above all, senior members of the Trump national security team must have the nerve to withstand Pakistan's angry backlash, the unity to avoid being played against one another, and the sensitivity to recalibrate pressure in response to successes (or failures).

## **Given China's heavy presence and influence in Pakistan, a successful American coercion of Islamabad will also require some coordination with Beijing.**

Given China's heavy presence and influence in Pakistan, a successful American coercion of Islamabad will also require some coordination with Beijing, otherwise it will be too easy for Pakistan to hide behind the insulating folds of China's mantle.

All told, this would be an extremely tall order under the best of circumstances. Judging from the general pattern of dysfunction and turmoil within the White House to date, however, there is precious little reason for optimism.

More important than these concerns about the competence of the current White House, the United States has more at stake in Pakistan than just the war in Afghanistan or even the threat posed by Pakistan-based international terrorism. Those urgent threats should not be allowed to entirely overshadow American interests in a nuclear-armed state of Pakistan's size, especially as Islamabad grows closer to China while failing to reduce its hostility toward India. Though it is not necessarily wrong

to try to force a fundamental shift in Pakistan's behavior, the effort is likely to fail, and Washington must be prepared to deal with the consequences. Salvaging an unsatisfactory but workable relationship with Islamabad may in time look like a more palatable outcome than adding Pakistan to America's list of outright adversaries.

The Obama Administration more or less held fast to a core strategic vision on India throughout its term. Obama ended his presidency on a high note of personal diplomacy with Prime Minister Modi in spite of their obvious ideological differences. At the top of the list of the Administration's accomplishments with India is the tightening of defense ties, including military sales and cooperative agreements. These ties are narrowly functional, with the potential to improve defensive capabilities for both India and the United States. However,

## Both Trump and Modi have similar inclinations to draw on populist themes, including that of anti-trade protectionism.

they also have a grander purpose: to build the foundation for a closer strategic partnership between the world's largest democratic state and its oldest, and to tip the global balance in favor of liberal order that serves both Washington and New Delhi. To put a finer point on it, when it comes to managing the rise of Chinese power in Asia, both Indians and Americans appreciate the ways in which their national interests converge.

On India, Trump would do well to stay the course. The question is whether his Administration, such as it is or isn't, and Washington more generally, will have sufficient patience with Indian policy, especially with respect to issues of trade and the global economy. On these matters American and Indian interests are less synchronized and even in outright conflict. Both Trump and Modi have similar inclinations to draw on populist themes, including

that of anti-trade protectionism. The confluence of anti-trade sentiment in both countries could be a deadly one if it is permitted to eclipse matters on which they agree.

So far, shrewd Indian officials have demonstrated themselves equal to the task of navigating summit diplomacy with the Trump White House, besting even their extremely effective Japanese counterparts. To reciprocate and, more importantly, to keep India on the Administration's agenda even when other urgent issues threaten, the President will likely need to identify a senior deputy for whom India is a top priority. At different stages of the Obama Administration, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and Deputy Secretary of State William Burns effectively played that role.

To succeed in India, the U.S. government will need patience enough to focus on the strategic payoffs inherent in the rise of a powerful—and enormous—Asian democracy. It will need, too, to consider what the private sector is doing to affect the bilateral relationship in ways it need not with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

To succeed in Pakistan, the United States will need to force important changes in the way Islamabad operates. Failing that, it will need to identify the least costly means of managing Pakistan's destabilizing influence over the long run.

And to succeed in Afghanistan, Washington will need to demonstrate commitment and flexibility sufficient to enable a political settlement minimally acceptable to the United States, Kabul, the bulk of the Taliban insurgency, and Afghanistan's most influential neighbors.

Finally, all of America's efforts should take into account the most significant—and likely lasting—change South Asia has witnessed since the end of the Soviet Union. This is not the threat posed by Islamist extremism and violence, but the growing economic, political, and military influence of China. 🌐