Policy Report

U.S. Military Assistance to India: Building Partner Capacity?

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

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Executive summary

The U.S. has invested vast amounts of money in building partner capacity (BPC) efforts with India since the end of the Cold War. U.S. objectives have typically been to enhance India's capacity for international peacekeeping, contributing to regional maritime security and counter-terrorism, participating in multi-national inter-operability for external operations, and improving military professionalism. The central question this policy brief addresses is: how effective has funding for U.S. programmes been?

It helps that India has high governance indicators, a strong and growing economy, is willing to invest its own resources into BPC, and have strong shared interests with the U.S. While joint training and exercises and equipment supply have helped India address specific internal and regional security challenges (jihadists in Kashmir, the Maoist and Naxalite armed movements, and terrorist cells based in Pakistan), BPC efforts have also helped foster broader regional security cooperation in addressing trans-national security threats.

Recommendations:

- U.S. BPC funding should continue as long as New Delhi and Washington's security interests strongly align;
- New Delhi should continue to invest resources into improving internal governance and streamlining bureaucratic processes;
- BPC efforts with India should be conceived and implemented with a view to fostering broader regional cooperation across several security sectors.

Introduction

The U.S. has spent vast amounts of money in military assistance and defence transfers to India. What has been the purpose of this assistance? What have been U.S. strategic objectives with India? How and to what extent has this assistance helped both countries achieve their respective objectives in South Asia and beyond? This report proceeds in four parts. First, it provides an overview of U.S. objectives in BPC activities with India. Second, it identifies the types, scale, and mix of capabilities and funding provided by both the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defence since the end of the Cold War. It then provides a brief assessment of the results of U.S. BPC activities, and identifies ways of deepening both bilateral and regional defence cooperation.

The United States and Building Partner Capacity

"Building Partner Capacity" is a term used to describe "targeted efforts to improve the collective capabilities and performance of the Department of Defence and its partners".[1] Global U.S. BPC efforts have been diverse and include military education and training, funding for military purchases, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, and maritime security. BPC programmes have aimed to contribute to regional security and stability, improve professionalism in foreign militaries, foster regional cooperation, help foreign governments improve bureaucratic processes, and improve multi-national inter-operability for external operations.

U.S. strategic objectives in India

U.S. strategic objectives in South Asia have varied over the decades, and there was a significant shift towards improving counter-terrorism capacity after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001. India faces a number of security challenges, including an insurgent movement in Kashmir and separatist groups elsewhere in the country. The areas of convergent interest include: China and balance of power calculations, terrorism, Afghanistan, and maritime security issues.

U.S. BPC activities with India

Typically, U.S. efforts have focused on improving capabilities to conduct counter-terrorism operations, improving border security, and deployment for humanitarian and U.N. peacekeeping operations. Some programmes are broad, some are more targeted, and much of the time efforts in one area of assistance flow into helping to improve Indian capabilities in another. For example, the U.S. Department of State's Anti-terrorism Assistance Programme is used to provide anti-terrorism assistance, but it can also be used to help improve border security and law enforcement. Also, some programmes are meant to provide training, but some are also meant to transfer equipment. More targeted forms of support include bilateral military exercises. Some examples include MALABAR (maritime tactics, techniques, and procedures), HABU NAG (amphibious operations), and SPITTING COBRA (explosive ordnance destruction focus). These exercises are important for developing professional relationships and familiarity in various aspects of high-end naval warfare. There are also regular naval bilateral staff talks, port visits, and personnel exchanges. Under the Joint Combined Exchange Programme (JCET), U.S. Special Operations Forces interact with their Indian counterparts to focus on close-quarters combat, medical evacuation, combined mission planning, and scenario-based missions.

There has also been joint training for disaster relief missions for the Indian Ocean. And both the U.S. Navy and the Indian Navy cooperated in disaster relief efforts after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, non-combatant evacuation operations in Lebanon in 2006, and counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008.

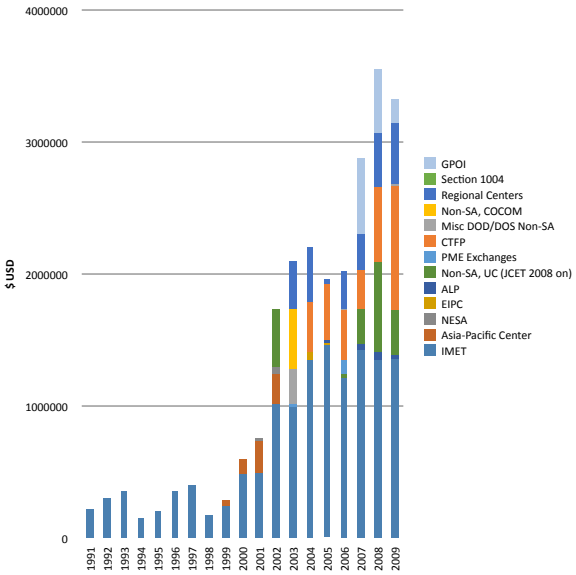
International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds are used to facilitate U.S. military-to-military professional contacts and assist in training exercises. The IMET programme is also intended training and education that increases the capabilities of participant nations' military forces to support combined operations and inter-operability with U.S., NATO and regional coalition forces. Development of an apolitical, professional military contributes to political stability and allows for increased participation in peacekeeping exercises. Specifically, India has used its IMET funding to send students to the Air Force and Navy Command and Staff Colleges, the Army and Air War Colleges and various officer training courses. These opportunities promote the U.S. goals of stability and democracy, and increase the Indian officer corps' familiarity with U.S. values and military practices. Indian military personnel also take part in courses on military law, medical training, logistics and maintenance, all of which increase awareness and understanding of U.S. policies, and allow U.S. officers to build lasting relationships with their Indian counterparts. The Counter Terrorism Fellowship Programme (CTFP) also provides training and education in integrating

[1] U.S. Department of Defence, Building Partnership Capacity: QDR Execution Roadmap, Washington, D.C., 22 May, 2006. Para 1.3.1. The concept also refers to the need to improve DoD's ability to work with non-military forces, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

inter-agency approaches to combating terrorism. The programme brings together counterparts from different countries and agencies across the counter-terrorism spectrum, which has allowed Indian authorities to develop a more holistic approach in addressing its trans-national security threats.

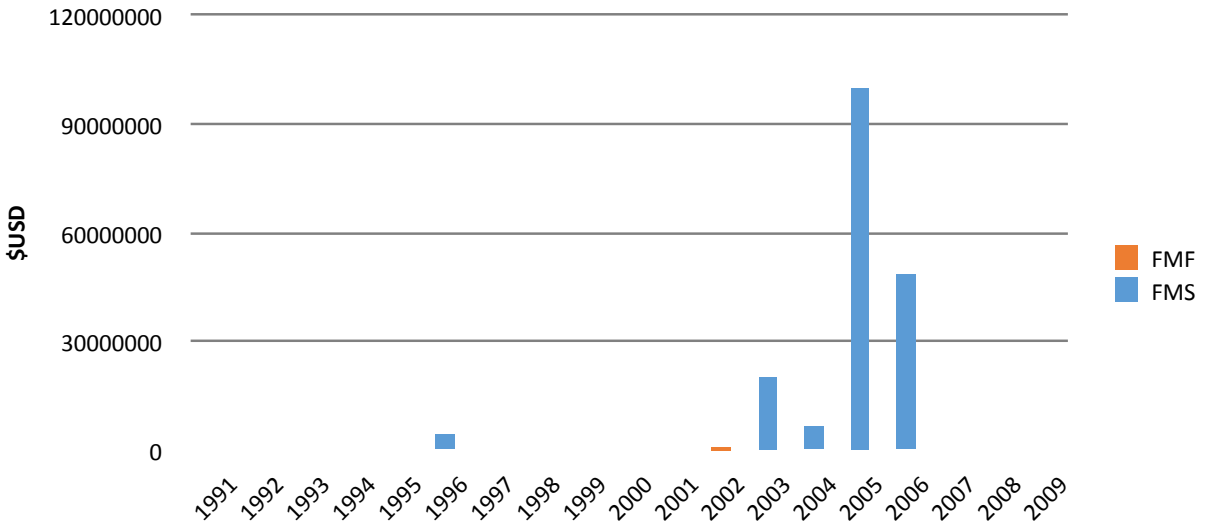
The Enhanced International Peacekeeping Capabilities Programme (EIPC) is designed to improve Indian capacity for peacekeeping operations. The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) is another such programme. Other programmes include the professional military education (PME) programme and Section 1004, which authorises U.S. training of Indian police forces in areas such as aerial and ground reconnaissance, communication networks, and linguistic and intelligence services. The tables below show the level of U.S. BPC funding to India (including foreign military sales [FMS] and foreign military funding [FMF]), 1991 to 2009.

Table 1: U.S. BPC funding to India, 1991-2009



Source: Reports to Congress by U.S. Department of State and Department of Defence, Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest, fiscal years 1991-2009, Washington, D.C.

Table 2: U.S. foreign military funding and foreign military sales to India, 1991-2009



Source: Reports to Congress by U.S. Department of State and Department of Defence, Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest, fiscal years 1991-2009, Washington, D.C.

U.S. military assistance to India: building capacity?

As a recent RAND report Building Partner Capacity: What Works Best and Under What Circumstances noted, BPC efforts tend to be most effective with countries that share U.S. security interests, have high governance indicators, a strong and growing economy, and are able to absorb assistance, and are willing to invest their own funds to sustain capacity-building. As a recent Stimson report has also pointed out, security assistance is more effective when it is tied to improving overall governance in fragile, weak, or post-conflict states.[2] Indeed, security assistance that helps in strengthening democratic institutions is likely to minimise the prospects for civil unrest and military coups.[3] Given that India has, over the years, scored relatively well in these areas, how useful have U.S. BPC activities been?

India has been confronted with insurgent and terrorist movements since independence. Historically, India's counter-terrorism efforts have been hampered by bureaucratically over-burdened law enforcement and legal systems. According to U.S. State Department and think tank reports, Indian police forces have generally been poorly staffed, trained, and equipped to deal with the terrorism challenge. This problem has been exacerbated by the absence of a unified command that would enhance coordination between competing security agencies.[4] India still experiences serious terrorist attacks conducted by the three main sources of insurgency and/or terrorism: Maoists in India's heartland, ethnic militants in the Northeast, and the jihadists in Kashmir who have bases in Pakistan.

One area where India has to make significant progress is civil-military relations and procurement management. As Anit Mukherjee argues, there are three peculiarities in the Indian defence establishment. First, the Ministry of Defence is not fully integrated with the Service Headquarters; the military community is not fully represented within an essentially civilian ministry. Second, Service Chiefs wield an undue amount of decision-making power which ends up minimising the amount of control civilians may exercise on the military. Lastly, the absence of theatre commands inhibits the ability of the armed forces to effectively conduct joint operations.[5] The Indian military may increasingly be called upon to conduct multilateral peacekeeping and disaster relief operations. As such, this is an area where the U.S. could focus efforts under the GPOI and IMET programmes. The other area would be to educate about reform in the defence procurement system, which suffers from numerous bureaucratic problems.[6]

As a result of shared security interests and cooperation in the areas mentioned above, there are now strong ties between both militaries. Exercises and exchange programmes have brought key actors on both sides closer together. There are now regular exercises across all services. For example, in 2011 there were 56 cooperate events across all the services. Many senior positions in the Indian military are occupied by IMET graduates. EIPC funding has been used to purchase surveillance, monitoring, and simulation equipment. Another programme is the State Department's Anti-Terrorism Country Assistance Plan. Under this programme Indian officials have undergone training in forensic analysis, bomb attack investigations, extradition and prosecution, and air and seaport security.
In 2005 India became the leading training country in South Asia. This has been an important stepping stone for expanding multilateral military cooperation, given that President

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[2] Gordon Adams and Rebecca Williams, A New Way Forward: Rebalancing Security Assistance Programmes and Authorities (Stimson Centre, Washington, D.C., 2011).

[3] See for example, Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, "Towards a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk", Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 47, No. 5 (2003), pp.594-620; James Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East", International Security, Vol. 24, No. 2, (1999), pp.131-165.

[4] Avnish Patel, "Enhancing Indian Counter-Terror Efforts After Mumbai". RUSI Commentary, 4 December 2008. At: http://www.rusi.org/go.php?structureID=commentary&ref=C49381BA04AF43#.Ur7WXGd3uP8

[5] Anit Mukherjee, "Marching Forward on Reform", The Hindu, 17 July 2012. At: http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/marching-forward-on-reform/article3646651.ece. See also, Anit Mukherjee, "Facing Future Challenges: Defence Reforms in India", RUSI Journal, Vol.156, No.5 (October 2011).

[6] For a detailed overview of these, see Vandana Kumar, "Reinventing Defence Procurement in India: Lessons from Other Countries and An Integrative Framework", Journal of Defence Studies, Vol. 7, No.3 (July-September 2013), pp.11-42. See also, the Honorable Shri N.N. Vohra, 2013 USI National Security Lecture on Civil Military Relations: Opportunities and Challenges. Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. At: http://idsa.in/resources/speech/CivilMilitaryRelations_NNVohra.

Manmohan Singh has recently declared India's partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to be the foundation of its "Look East Policy".[7] New Delhi intends to "grow" its cooperation with ASEAN in areas of maritime security, counter-terrorism, training, exercises and disaster management. U.S. military assistance to India since the late 1990s has been foundational to this expanding regional cooperation. There will still be major restricting factors on the extent of such cooperation, including the economic situation of some of the smaller ASEAN nations, as well as the cost of movement and maintenance of ships, troops, or aircraft, and some form of joint command headquarters for operational deployments will be needed. Still, these are first steps towards greater regional cooperation on trans-national terrorism and disaster relief. U.S. assistance has also helped India expand cooperation with its neighbours in combating terrorism. In 2011 the Indian and Bangladeshi governments signed a coordinated border management plan, which aims to synergise both countries' border security forces.

The other area where U.S. BPC efforts have contributed is in peacekeeping operations. This is one area where the results of BPC efforts are relatively easier to measure. A general issue with evaluating outcomes of U.S. assistance, however, is disentangling causal conflation. For example, was the increase in deployed troops for a given mission a result of BPC efforts, or was it a product of the partner's own efforts at self-improvement? However, there is a bigger picture here; would India have made as much efforts at self-improvement without U.S. assistance and outside the context of strong shared security interests? As the table below shows, after 2001 India contributed much more to UN peacekeeping operations after about 2005, and is now one of the largest peacekeeping contributors in the world.[8] The Indian Army has, of course, a long history of overseas deployment.[9] However, the nature of modern operations has changed in the years since the Cold War. They are increasingly multi-national, require rapid reaction, are global in reach, have limited objectives, require a much wider range of simultaneous tasks, and are much longer in duration.[10] True, it is difficult to establish a direct causal relationship between the amount of investment by the U.S. in a particular defence programme and specific outputs. If one were to compare India with other countries in the region, one would have to factor in that some countries are long-standing U.S. allies; some may just be emerging from civil conflict; some may have strong political sensitivities to U.S. military assistance. However, the general observation is that U.S. programmes such as the EIPC, GPOI and PME, in the general context of a broader, strong strategic partnership, have been a positive contribution to the Indian armed forces' ability to operate and indeed endure in such political and operational contexts.

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[7] "India-ASEAN is our Strategic Objective, says Manmohan". The Hindu, 20 November 2011. At: http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indiaasean-connectivity-is-our-strategic-objective-says-manmohan/article2641786.ece

[8] "Background Note: United Nations Peacekeeping". United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. November 2013. At: https://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/backgroundnote.pdf

[9] For a brief overview of this, see for example Satish Nambiar, "UN Peacekeeping & India's National Strategy". National Strategy Lecture, 4 March 2011. Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. At: http://idsa.in/event/INSPInt/UNPeacekeepingIndiasNationalStrategy

[10] For a more detailed analysis of the nature of modern operations, see European Military Capabilities: Building Armed Forces for Modern Operations (International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 2008).

Table 3: Deployment of Indian forces, 1997- 2012

Operation	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
UNOMA	390	151										
UNMIBH	147											
UNOCI								8	5	8	8	8
UNTMIH	3											
UNIKOM	5	5	5	6		8						
UNOMIL	14											
UNOMSIL		6	6									
MINURSO		10	10									
MONUC				12	20	31	41	375	3514	3501	4376	4380
UNIHL				618								
UNAMSIL				3161								
UNMEE					1328	1537	1545	1560	1556	1602	985	715
UNDCOM					6							
UNIFIL					792	839	691	647	648	671	671	884
UNMIS									332	1040	2604	2606
UNDOF												191
Afghanistan												400

Operation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Afghanistan	400	400	400	400	400
UNOCI	7	8	6	8	8
MONUC	4388	4249	4243	3707	3693
UNIFIL	897	898	910	896	894
UNMIS	2607	2600	2633	2303	1997
UNDOF	187	195	190	192	191

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1997-2013.

In addition to training and education, since 2002, India has signed more than twenty foreign military sales (FMS) cases for systems such as the C-17 and C-130J aircraft, TPQ-37 radars, and Harpoon missiles. In 2011, New Delhi signed a contract for 10 C-17 Globemaster III strategic transport aircraft. Deliveries are expected to be completed in 2014. This capability will greatly enhance India's contributions to external operations, including peacekeeping missions. The aircraft can carry tanks, supplies and troops directly to small airfield in harsh terrain during day or night. Such acquisitions have enabled the U.S. military to reach a new level of interaction with the Indian military; the C-130Js have been successfully employed to provide critical humanitarian assistance following the 2011 earthquake in Sikkim. The completed contract will also mean India fields the second largest fleet of C-17s in the world. This will enhance India's force projection capacities and may pave the way for enhanced multilateral military cooperation with ASEAN nations. Indian forces have also disrupted more than thirty piracy attempts by Somali operatives in the Arabian Sea. Over 120 pirates have been arrested and India has been conducting patrols in the areas surrounding Mauritius, Maldives, Seychelles, and Madagascar. It has also provided these countries with staff and training. India has also hosted a number of symposiums on maritime security issues that included participants from the littoral states and even Australia.

Bilateral and multilateral consequences of U.S. BPC efforts

The broad result of U.S. BPC efforts has been to improve the strategic partnership between New Delhi and Washington. If U.S. military assistance is consistently funded and delivered, supported and sustained (by both parties), well matched to India's capabilities and interests, and as long as India retains a healthy economy and strives to improve internal governance, and continues and improves as a security provider rather than a security consumer, then Washington may be more likely to sustain and expand its current defence programmes and transfers to New Delhi. This, of course, raises an important and broader question: at what point do U.S. security partners stop receiving such assistance and become fully-fledged security providers themselves? And to what extent does it affect foreign policy autonomy?[11] Are they expected to reach a point where they stop receiving military assistance and training? What might that point be? To an important extent, the ultimate aim of U.S. policy is to retain some degree of influence and access to foreign territories[12] (for example, to contain countries that begin with "C" and end in "A"), so the same metrics for "success" may not apply.

The Indian experience was but one that was analysed in the aforementioned RAND study. The study revealed several broad conclusions that are relevant to thinking about the types of future of U.S. BPC activities in South Asia and the broader Asia Pacific. First, U.S. and partner interests should strongly align. Second, the partner country should be able to adequately absorb the assistance. Third, partner countries should demonstrate a commitment to: achieving good governance, establishing strong democratic institutions free from corruption, sustainable economic growth, and a willingness to eventually invest their own funds to sustain capacity building.

In spite of serious difficulties with combating the serious terrorist threat across South Asia as a whole, the Indian story is one of general success. But it is important to consider the broader context. It is U.S. military assistance to South Asia as a whole that has contributed to improving partner nations' security forces and encouraging governments to be more active on a multilateral basis. Bangladesh, for instance, has been an enthusiastic and ambitious BPC recipient ever since the U.S. assistance increased dramatically in 2005 - a lump sum of over US$5.6 million dollars in general Military Assistance Programme grants alone (MAP grants).[13]

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[11] The author is grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for raising these issues.

[12] The author is grateful to Harvey Sapolsky for this more realist perspective.

[13] MAP grants are a specific programme of military assistance.

There are several conclusions we can draw from this brief overview of U.S. BPC efforts:

(i) U.S. counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism efforts work best on a holistic level and in tandem with assistance to police and security forces, not just military ones;

(ii) states benefit from cooperating with neighbours. Indian and Bangladeshi cooperation helped secure the capture of one of the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks;

(iii) national counter-terrorism capacity is enhanced by an effective law enforcement regime, consistently strong inter-agency coordination, and minimal corruption; and

(iv) U.S. engagement with foreign militaries helps promote regional defence cooperation and inter-operability. U.S. BPC funding has gone a long way in the past ten years, and it is clear that these efforts have helped generate a longer-term strategic partnership in combating regional terrorism.

Still, there are a few areas where BPC funding could improve success in bilateral counter-terrorism efforts. The first area would be to help New Delhi improve bureaucratic processes and ensure that federal agencies take the lead in counter-terrorism coordination. A second example would be to expand cooperation in maritime security, such as training and intelligence-sharing in ocean surveillance capabilities. Small steps such as these would help develop a stronger strategic partnership and foster trust-building between both countries.[14] However, Washington will need to continue to invest funds into improving Indian ministerial capacity, training police and security forces (not just military forces), and exercises and training programmes that promote region-wide counter-terrorism cooperation in military operations and intelligence-sharing.

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[14] For a discussion on geopolitical obstacles to deeper bilateral cooperation, see for example Sunjoy Joshi, C. Raja Mohan, Vikram Sood, Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, James Jay Carafano, Walter Lohman, Lisa Curtis, and Derek Scissors, “Beyond the Plateau in U.S.-India Relations”, Heritage Foundation, 26 April 2013. Washington, D.C.. At: http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/04/beyond-the-plateau-in-us-india-relations.

Author's Biography

Christine M. Leah is currently a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow in the Security Studies Program at MIT. She was previously a Visiting Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), a research intern for Karen News, a summer associate at the RAND Corporation, and a research intern/analyst at IISS-Asia, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, IISS-London, the French Ministry of Defence, and the UMP office of Mr Nicolas Sarkozy. She is an alumna of SWAMOS, PPNT, and the Woodrow Wilson Centre Nuclear Bootcamp.

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