

“The U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: Securing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific”

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Chairman Huizenga, Ranking Member Kamlager-Dove, distinguished members of the South and Central Asia Subcommittee, thank you very much for the opportunity to testify at today’s hearing on “The U.S.-India Strategic Partnership: Securing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific”.

I would like to reflect on five aspects of the relationship: first principles, U.S. strategic objectives, recent progress, potential challenges, and recommendations for Congress.

I. First Principles: Why India?

Given the purpose of this hearing, it is important to reflect on first principles or why there has been a bipartisan consensus on the strategic importance of India for over twenty-five years. To put it simply, we the United States see India as a major power—and one of the most consequential in the 21st century—given our shared interests, democratic institutions, and visions of international order.

India is a **leading economic, military, and innovation power**, poised to become a pole in the international system. It is already the world’s fifth largest economy, and projected to ascend to the third largest within a few years. India sits aside strategic geography in the Indo-Pacific, and is arguably among the five most powerful militaries in the world, with expectations that its military capabilities and power projection will continue to grow. It also possesses tremendous “innovation power” having mastered the nuclear fuel cycle, landed on the moon, and developed world-class digital public infrastructure.

India also shares our core **strategic interests** in the Indo-Pacific for a balance of power without regional dominance by any one nation. We both want to see a free and open Indo-Pacific with resilient supply chains paired with economic growth and higher standards of living. We both seek a multipolar Asia that checks the pacing challenge of China, and its attempts at coercion, military aggression, or geopolitical dominance.¹ Further, we both want open,

¹ Elbridge Colby, “Take India’s Side, America,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/take-indias-side-america-11552430337>.

democratic societies like ours championing the development and command of critical and emerging technologies that will define the future. While we may diverge on some matters of secondary import, these are narrow and diminishing over time, while our core interests regarding a free and open Indo-Pacific are expanding in scope and in salience.

Finally, our shared interests are reinforced by **common values**, democratic political systems, and principles of international order—even if we are not perfectly aligned at all times. Our democratic institutions have provided a stable political order and proved resilient and capable of correction, even when we falter. And we are aligned on the values that most matter to peace, security, and prosperity. We share a belief in freedom of navigation, overflight, and commerce, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and geopolitics without conquest, just as President Trump affirmed with Prime Minister Modi in February of this year.

II. Strategic Objectives

Recognizing that geopolitics is driven by national self-interest, India stands out as a vital partner for **mutually beneficial collaboration**. The strategic partnership with India offers the United States greater economic, technology, and defense opportunities to advance and safeguard American interests.

First and foremost, we aim to deepen **economic exchange** and integrate our economies to power shared prosperity and to compete effectively with China. India offers access to one of the world's fastest-growing markets. With a large, youthful population and expanding middle class, India represents a substantial opportunity for American exporters in sectors such as energy, defense, technology, agriculture, and healthcare. U.S. companies benefit from India's highly skilled workforce—particularly in technology and engineering—which drives innovation, cost-effective production, and growth in digital and service-oriented industries. Greater economic collaboration and deeper integration of U.S.–Indian supply chains strengthen resilience, create leverage against economic coercion from China, and generate new jobs, investment, and shared prosperity.

Second, **science and technology cooperation** with India—home to one of the world's largest and most dynamic innovation ecosystems—can help the U.S. sustain technological superiority over China and strengthen its position in the global techno-economic competition.

India arguably possesses what some have termed “innovation power,”² a resource the U.S. must leverage. India has repeatedly demonstrated its scientific and engineering prowess through indigenous breakthroughs, including the development of nuclear weapons, the

² Eric Schmidt, “Innovation Power: Why Technology Will Define the Future of Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2023, pp. 38-52, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/eric-schmidt-innovation-power-technology-geopolitics>.

deployment of a navigation satellite system, a successful lunar landing, and the creation of the world's largest digital identity and payments infrastructure.

India has become an innovation powerhouse, particularly in critical and emerging technologies, including information technology, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum technologies, and space. Over the past fifteen years, India has climbed rapidly in the Global Innovation Index, ranking among the most efficient and overperforming countries with high levels of knowledge and technology outputs for a lower middle income country.³

Moreover, India offers “scale”, crucial for the U.S. and its allies to compete with China.⁴ For instance, India produces about three times the number of STEM graduates and five times the number of engineers as the United States.⁵ With world-class S&T talent and 20% of the world’s chip designers, India attracts leading firms such as Microsoft, Google, Boeing, and Intel to establish engineering hubs. And now its burgeoning deep-tech ecosystem has yielded thousands of startups, which are rapidly growing, and beginning to partner with American universities, research labs, defense companies, and the Pentagon.

Bilateral initiatives underway in areas like semiconductor manufacturing and space cooperation create long-term strategic advantages for both our countries. The joint U.S.-India NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite, launched in July, already enables precise monitoring of surface movements (down to centimeters) for disaster preparedness, agriculture, and infrastructure planning.

Finally, **defense cooperation** with India strengthens deterrence and enables burden-sharing in the Indo-Pacific through enhanced capabilities, joint exercises, intelligence sharing, forward deployments, and standing security missions.

India is already balancing the PLA militarily, with tens of thousands of troops deployed forward for years to defend its borders and deter further Chinese aggression or “salami-slicing” incursions. As India modernizes, U.S. defense technology and intelligence cooperation can help it develop more advanced sensor-to-shooter capabilities—complicating Chinese military planning and strengthening border defense. India’s ability to threaten Chinese assets along its western border and near the Strait of Malacca could impose significant dilemmas on Beijing and enhance deterrence.

India’s growing defense industrial base can provide redundancy and resilience for the overstretched U.S. and European defense sectors—particularly in areas like drones, artillery,

³ World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), *Global Innovation Index 2025: Innovation at a Crossroads*, WIPO, September 16, 2025, <https://www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=4807&plang=EN>.

⁴ Kurt M. Campbell and Rush Doshi, “Underestimating China: Why America Needs a New Strategy of Allied Scale to Offset Beijing’s Enduring Advantages,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2025, pp. 66-81, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/underestimating-china>.

⁵ India produces approximately 850,000 engineering graduates annually compared to 140,000 in the US based on 2022 data from the All India Survey on Higher Education and the US National Center for Education Statistics.

sonobuoys, and missiles. US partnerships with the Indian defense industry will also enable both countries to better compete against China and Russia for market share and influence in the Global South.

Over time, U.S.–India defense cooperation could evolve to motivate and enable India to make meaningful contributions in a potential Indo-Pacific contingency involving China. U.S. strategists often envision India’s military contribution applying horizontal pressure along the disputed Western border,⁶ forcing China to divert resources or overwhelming its ability to conduct multi-theater operations.⁷

Alternatively, India could cover down in the Indian Ocean and assume greater day-to-day maritime security responsibilities typically handled by the U.S. Navy. By relieving the U.S. of these responsibilities—maritime security, counter-piracy, and deterring opportunistic aggression⁸—India would free American assets to reorient assets to the Pacific. Covering down could even involve the Indian Navy protecting transiting U.S. naval assets, by detecting, stalking, and holding at risk PLAN submarines that might seek to threaten U.S. capacity to swing forces across the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.⁹ India’s surface fleet and air forces are also capable of air defense missions that could shield U.S. naval vessels maneuvering through the Indian Ocean from PRC aerial assaults.

Without directly mobilizing any of its own military assets, India could still contribute significantly to a coalition defense that leverages its geography by offering the United States and its partners military logistics support, ground and space-based ISR, overflight for intelligence collection to bomber taskforces, and access during peacetime and wartime to critical geographies like the Andaman and Nicobar islands. India could also provide surge capacity for defense industrial and subcomponent production in the event of a protracted conflict.

⁶ Russell A. Berman and Michael Auslin, "Opening Up Second Fronts in Great Power Conflict," *The National Interest*, February 24, 2022, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/opening-second-fronts-great-power-conflict-200773>; Ken Moriyasu, India Presents China a Two-Front Problem, U.S. Navy Chief Suggests," *Nikkei Asia*, August 27, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/politics/international-relations/indo-pacific/india-presents-china-a-two-front-problem-u-s-navy-chief-suggests>.

⁷ Joel Wuthnow, *System Overload: Can China’s Military Be Distracted in a War over Taiwan?* Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, June 2020, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/2232448/system-overload-can-chinas-military-be-distracted-in-a-war-over-taiwan/>.

⁸ Hal Brands and Evan Braden Montgomery, "Opportunistic Aggression in the Twenty-first Century," *Survival* 62, no. 2 (April–May 2020): 157–182, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00396338.2020.1792129>.

⁹ Randall G. Schriver, "Statement for the Record, Hearing on America’s Way Forward in the Indo-Pacific," U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, Central Asia and Nonproliferation, March 19, 2021, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA05/20210319/111383/HHRG-117-FA05-Wstate-SchriverR-20210319.pdf>.

While India may not undertake all or any of these actions, Indian analysts and former officials are actively debating these possibilities because of India's own strategic stakes.¹⁰ As U.S.-India defense cooperation deepens, the prospect of Indian involvement grows, and itself strengthens deterrence against future PLA aggression.

III. Taking Stock of Recent Progress

The Congressional Research Service does incredible work tracking progress in the U.S.-India strategic relationship but I will draw out a few milestones, particularly in the defense and technology domain, that are worth highlighting.

New Frameworks

New U.S.-India frameworks for defense and technology cooperation are driving policy breakthroughs, deeper operational training, and strong market signals for joint innovation and industrial collaboration.

The 2+2 ministerial dialogues have strengthened strategic coordination across the diplomatic, information, military and economic domains in our competition with China. The Maritime Security Dialogue and the Advanced Domains Defense Dialogue have enabled us to focus on collaborative opportunities in both the Indian Ocean, and in space.

Recent initiatives like the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (ICET) committed by both sides to coordinate on key technology deals and outcomes, has already delivered progress in certain areas of semiconductors, defense, space, export control dialogues. There remain high expectations that the current administration will build on these efforts with its next iteration—Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology or “TRUST” and make progress in new areas such as biotechnology, quantum technology, and artificial intelligence.¹¹

The India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X)—which I am proud to have helped support—has built connective tissue between our defense industries. It has broken information silos and horizontally and vertically networked key stakeholders—end users, startup innovators, defense primes, venture capital, research institutions, and policymakers.¹²

¹⁰ Vijay Gokhale, *What Should India Do Before the Next Taiwan Strait Crisis?* Carnegie India, April 17, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/04/what-should-india-do-before-the-next-taiwan-strait-crisis>; Sudhi Ranjan Sen, *India's Military Studying Options for Any China-Taiwan War*, *Bloomberg*, September 8, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-09-08/india-s-military-studying-options-for-any-china-war-on-taiwan>.

¹¹ Rudra Chaudhuri, “What is the India–United States TRUST Initiative?,” Carnegie India, April 22, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2025/04/what-is-the-india-united-states-trust-initiative?lang=en>.

¹² Sameer Lalwani and Vikram Singh, “INDUS-X at One: A Year of Bilateral Breakthroughs” U.S. Institute of Peace, September 9, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20241105160550/https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/09/indus-x-one-year-bilateral-breakthroughs>

There is a direct throughline between coproducing capabilities to coproducing deterrence.¹³ INDUS-X efforts have catalyzed industrial partnerships to co-develop and co-produce sonobuoys and uncrewed surface vessels to better track China's navy, air-launched unmanned aerial vehicles for surveillance and combat support, commercial space collaborations for space domain awareness, and trusted semiconductor production for advanced sensing, communication, and power electronics.

I believe the new Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA) will build on INDUS-X by stimulating joint collaborations to bring artificial intelligence capabilities to the battlefield and our warfighters, enhancing insight, autonomy, data fusion, sustainment, and decision support.

The new Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership—signed at the end of October—formalizes these efforts into an ambitious ten year agenda. It *prioritizes* defense as a major pillar in the relationship, clarifies a *shared mission* of deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, *expands* defense cooperation to advanced domains like space, cyber, and artificial intelligence, and recommits to *joint development and production* of defense capabilities by comingling our defense innovation ecosystems.

Expanding Military Exercises and Missions

The remarkable growth in US-India defense exercises over the past decade demonstrates our commitment to operationalizing this defense partnership. Despite some political headwinds, the US and India will conduct nearly as many military and tabletop exercises in 2025 as last years' peak of 18.

In recent months, we have conducted major exercises on land, air, and sea. These include a P-8 maritime patrol exercise near the strategically critical Diego Garcia base; naval exercise Malabar—a *de facto* Quad exercise (featuring Australia, India, Japan, and the United States)—conducted off the coast of Guam featuring joint fleet and anti-submarine warfare operations;¹⁴ and Cope India, a bilateral air exercise with Quad observers featuring a U.S. B-1 bomber.¹⁵

The growing number of exercises has been matched by qualitative leaps. In September 2025, the 21st annual edition of the U.S.-India “Yudh Abhyas” Army exercise featured a brigade-level drill integrating U.S. and Indian forces and fielding new capabilities. The exercise has evolved from small-scale firing and counterterror exercises into one of the largest exercises the Indian Army holds with a focus on cyber, drone, and extreme terrain warfare.

¹³ Robert Peters, “The United States and India: A Call to Confront the Shared China Threat,” Heritage Foundation, September 25, 2025, <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/the-united-states-and-india-call-confront-the-shared-china-threat>.

¹⁴ Ministry of Defence, “EXERCISE MALABAR 2025 AT GUAM,” Press Information Bureau, November 9, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2188052®=3&lang=1>.

¹⁵ Indian Air Force (@IAF_MCC), “X Post,” X (formerly Twitter), November 11, 2025, https://x.com/IAF_MCC/status/1988461808605426169.

Just as important, India is strengthening military interoperability with other US allies—signing new naval technology agreements with Japan and conducting joint exercises with the Philippines in the South China Sea.¹⁶

Beyond exercises, India is partnering with the United States on standing missions that defend the Indo-Pacific every day. One example is the Quad’s Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness, which tracks illegal fishing, trafficking, and dark shipping, and could evolve into a full maritime intelligence-sharing arrangement. India has also joined the Combined Maritime Force for operational missions on maritime security, counter-piracy, and counter-narcotics, and has even assumed a command role.

Defense Innovation and Industrial Collaboration

Finally, we are seeing real breakthroughs in collaborative defense innovation and industrial production. US defense sales are accelerating as deals increasingly involve co-production and indigenous technology integration, especially with India’s defense private sector and rapidly growing defense tech startups

The US and India have announced numerous defense co-production collaborations across jet engines, sonobuoys, unmanned aerial systems, and autonomous surface vessels. Even the Predator drones India is purchasing from General Atomics will source key technologies—from precision targeting chips to AI algorithms to landing gear components—from Indian suppliers.

The Indian Navy is poised to purchase six additional P8-I maritime patrol aircraft in 2026, with significant local production and indigenous content, including radars and missiles.

The Pentagon recently announced plans to sell India its first batch of javelin missiles and launchers¹⁷. This deal could scale into larger purchases and pave the way for eventual co-production in India. For the Indian Army that has historically relied on Soviet and Russian equipment, inducting and co-producing the “Russian tank killer” underscores India’s new strategic direction. There are countless more pending opportunities to deepen defense industrial ties—from scaling maintenance and logistics, including ship repair, to tens of billions of dollars in joint projects and acquisitions already in the pipeline.

Thanks to efforts like INDUS-X and ASIA, industrial collaboration now includes India’s defense startups and small and medium enterprises. Since 2018, the number of US-India defense

¹⁶ Kosuke Takahashi, “Japan and India progress towards UNICORN stealth antenna deal,” *Naval News*, August 27, 2024, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/08/japan-and-india-progress-towards-unicorn-stealth-antenna-deal>; Jim Gomez, “India, Philippines hold first joint sail in South China Sea,” *AP News*, May 10, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/india-philippines-joint-sail-south-china-sea-8041d8e137c644838612f00f074d284a>.

¹⁷ Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), “India – Javelin Missile System,” Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), November 19, 2025, <https://www.dsca.mil/Press-Media/Major-Arms-Sales/Article-Display/Article/4337533/india-javelin-missile-system>.

industrial collaborations—covering capital investments, challenges, R&D, and industrial teaming—has grown at an exponential rate, which I have tracked in other work.¹⁸

In addition to the strategic and security benefits, these efforts have produced real economic benefits for the United States. Indian deep tech startups focused on AI to space are starting to set up subsidiaries in the United States, bringing investments, jobs, and innovation to our shores.

IV. Potential Challenges

Several challenges to the US-India strategic partnership have been raised—India’s warming ties with China, its enduring relations with Russia, US-India trade tensions, and a “say-do” gap—but only some of these pose real headwinds.

China

There has been concern expressed over India’s recent outreach to China following Prime Minister Modi’s meeting with Xi Jinping at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit. However, the relationship remains largely adversarial. India seeks to manage differences with China and avoid crises by establishing some guardrails—much like the United States has done—while maintaining a rivalrous approach.

New Delhi’s tensions with Beijing will persist because of long-standing strategic differences. Disputes over the border, Indian equities in a multipolar Asia, terrorism, and a significant trade imbalance continue to strain relations and fuel suspicion. India also harbors deep distrust of China’s weaponized technology platforms—such as telecom networks, data systems, and digital infrastructure—and increasingly turns to the West as a natural technology partner.

China’s belligerent behavior further sharpens this adversarial relationship. Beijing’s economic coercion, including export restrictions on critical inputs and technology, has harmed Indian sectors such as farming, infrastructure, and manufacturing. The violent border clashes in 2020 and China’s recent battlefield collusion with Pakistan’s military campaign against India reinforce New Delhi’s perception that its territory and security remain directly threatened by China’s rising military power.¹⁹

These hard security realities and structural differences ensure the India-China rivalry will endure—regardless of temporary diplomatic warmth—and make India a natural partner for the United States in the Indo-Pacific.

¹⁸ Sameer Lalwani, “Don’t Call it a Comeback: Why US-India Relations are Due for a Rebound,” SCSP Substack, November 20, 2025, <https://scsp222.substack.com/p/dont-call-it-a-comeback-why-us-india>.

¹⁹ Sameer Lalwani, “Has the United States Really Lost India?” German Marshall Fund US, September 15, 2025, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/has-united-states-really-lost-india>.

Russia

India's enduring ties with Russia, while challenging, do not fundamentally threaten the U.S.–India relationship. India's strategic relationship with Russia is historic and path-dependent, shaped by decades of accumulated military equipment. Today, however, it is narrowing considerably—focused mainly on hydrocarbons, nuclear energy, and conventional weapons. The thin gruel of “outcomes” from President Putin's recent state visit to India underscores the limits of this relationship. Notably absent were any serious announcements on military or strategic technology cooperation.²⁰

Washington should neither be surprised nor particularly concerned by India's continued engagement with Russia in narrow or legacy areas. India will remain dependent on certain Russian systems—such as specific missiles, air defense platforms, and propulsion technologies—because of choices made decades ago. While the relationship is clearly on a downward trajectory, it retains a long tail.

In areas of greatest consequence to U.S. interests—such as maritime security and underwater domain awareness—India is decisively tilting towards America. In 2023, India retired its last Russian maritime patrol aircraft while finalizing a deal to acquire U.S. Sea Guardian drones to complement its advanced maritime reconnaissance assets, including U.S.-origin maritime patrol aircraft and helicopters. When it comes to India's future economic and strategic development through emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotechnology, Russia is not even in the game. India is openly embracing cooperation with the United States and the West.

US Tariffs and Trade Disputes

The most obvious point of friction in the U.S.-India relationship is trade, which has raised new questions in India about U.S. commitment and future reliability. While the administration's pursuit of a historic trade deal is a commendable objective—aiming to achieve \$500 billion in trade and investment by 2030—the means employed in recent months risk backfiring and could produce a more multi-aligned India.²¹

The implementation of a 50% tariff on Indian goods—combining a 25% reciprocal tariff and another 25% duty linked to India's purchases of Russian oil—imposed one of the highest tariff levels on any American trading partner, let alone one considered a close strategic partner. By many accounts, India appeared ready months ago to make historic concessions on tariffs and market access in a trade deal that would have afforded U.S. industry a level playing field and enormous opportunities.

²⁰ Ministry of External Affairs, “List of Outcomes: State Visit of the President of the Russian Federation to India (December 04 – 05, 2025),” Ministry of External Affairs, December 5, 2025, https://www.meaindia.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/40409>List_of_Outcomes_State_Visit_of_the_President_of_the_Russian_Federation_to_India_December_04_05_2025.

²¹ James Crabtree and Rudra Chaudhuri, “The India That Trump Made: How American Bullying Is Shaping Indian Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 3, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/india/india-trump-made>.

The absence of a deal and indefinite high tariffs will undoubtedly harm Indian livelihoods and its economy, but more importantly, set back the U.S.-India relationship. The perception that this tariff level is inordinately harsh and punitive has fueled frustration and resentment toward the United States, undermined pro-U.S. champions in Delhi, and risks eroding decades of painstakingly built trust.

Even if a trade deal for a lower tariff rate is concluded and implemented, this experience could cloud the relationship for an extended period. New Delhi's perception of unjustified U.S. strong-arm tactics may lead it to price in an "uncertainty discount" to the relationship. It could become longer and more difficult to secure India's agreement on future strategic activities—ranging from conventional arms purchases and logistics arrangements to intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and public diplomatic coordination on China. After a trade deal is hopefully concluded soon, additional costly signals from Washington to invest in the relationship will be critical to repair the damage and restore the partnership to full strength.

The "Say-Do Gap"

The last—and perhaps most formidable—obstacle is the "say-do gap". We commit to pathbreaking ideas on paper, but follow-through and implementation often lag far behind. In June 2023, the United States and India agreed to a landmark deal for co-production of GE F414 engines in India to power India's indigenous fighter aircraft, "an unprecedented technology transfer."²² Unfortunately, implementation has languished for two and a half years due to contract negotiations and bureaucratic inertia, costing both countries valuable time. We've talked about building joint investment funds and accelerators, scaling joint challenges for technology experimentation in exercises, and conducting tabletop exercises on Indo-Pacific conflict contingencies among policymakers, but these have yet to translate into action.

Closing this gap requires resourcing initiatives like TRUST, INDUS-X, and ASIA with sufficient budgets, personnel, and authorities to execute their missions. We must act *decisively*—and at the speed and scale our challenge demands—to generate meaningful geopolitical and deterrent effects.

V. Policy Recommendations

With these objectives, achievements, and challenges in mind, I offer the following recommendations for how Congress can bolster the US-India Strategic Partnership.

Defense and Security

- Increase funding for the offices and initiatives dedicated to expanding **joint development and production of defense capabilities.**

²² Kurt M. Campbell and Jake Sullivan, "The Case for a U.S. Alliance With India," *Foreign Affairs*, September 4, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/india-alliance-jake-sullivan-kurt-campbell>.

- This includes the parts of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) dedicated to supporting INDUS-X efforts, including joint accelerators, joint challenge prizes, INDUS-X Summits, and defense innovation trade delegations.
 - A dedicated **U.S.–India Prototyping Accelerator** should also be resourced to move joint prize challenges from concept to prototype to field testing within US-India exercises, and ultimately deployment.²³
 - DIU should be directed to utilize other transaction authority pathways for bilateral co-production projects in priority areas identified by the recent *Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership* including ISR; undersea domain awareness; air combat and support; air and space domain awareness; munitions; and mobility.
 - Additional funds should also be authorized to the parts of the Pentagon supporting foreign comparative testing and cooperation research and development agreements with Indian researchers and companies.
- Establish a **Joint Investment Fund** (first conceived in the inaugural INDUS-X joint statement of June 2023) to invest directly in deep-tech startups teaming. This could be modeled on previous joint investment fund efforts like the BIRD Foundation.
- Expand the funding and scope of the U.S. **International Military Education and Training** program to support training of Indian military personnel with U.S. personnel for operational missions, such as training on theater anti-submarine warfare.
- Create a platform for exploration of US-India co-development and **co-production of long-range strike capabilities** to compete with the India-Russia BrahMos missile program. This could take place under the existing Defense Trade and Technology Initiative mechanisms and be modeled after the June 2025 US-Australia cooperative program for the Precision Strike Missile.
- **Streamline export controls** for India in certain classes of arms and dual-use capabilities in the prioritized domains specified in the defense partnership framework.
 - Legislation to reduce or exempt export controls can be modeled on AUKUS legislation, which adds a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act amending the Arms Export Control Act to implement TRUST/INDUS-X/ASIA objectives.
 - The intent would be to streamline and expedite licensing process, or even allow exemptions or pre-authorization for certain capabilities following a determination that India has implemented export control systems comparable to the United States’.

²³ Kriti Upadhyaya, “Sustaining American Military Dominance with Indian Scale,” Heritage Foundation, August 29, 2025, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/sustaining-american-military-dominance-indian-scale-why-the-us-and-india-need>.

- **Independent Assessment.** As part of the next National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the U.S. Congress could mandate an independent study to review the US-India “Major Defense Partnership” since it was announced 10 years ago in the 2016 NDAA. It could assess progress and suggest paths forward on defense operational cooperation and implementation of the *Framework* and vision of the new US National Defense Strategy. The effort can culminate in a final report to the Armed Services and Foreign Affairs Committees in both houses of Congress.

Diplomacy and Commerce

- Expand the authorities and funding for the State Department’s Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy to scale efforts under TRUST including:
 - Joint technology incubation centers in both countries to drive private-sector investment, focusing on the five TRUST technology areas—semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology, and space technology—with dedicated funding streams and streamlined regulatory approval processes;
 - A research, innovation, STEM exchange initiative to centralize discussions on bilateral academic exchanges, student visas, joint research, and pool investment vehicles to generate capital for young entrepreneurs;
 - Non-official dialogues for business, science and technology, and defense;
 - Efforts to harmonize export control regimes between the US and India, particularly for the five critical technology areas under TRUST.²⁴
- Increase funding for the **International Visitor Leadership Programs** to expand programming specific to India’s deep-technology sector. The 2024 IVLP on U.S.-India Commercial Space Collaboration proved a remarkable success and led to new partnerships and investments in the US. This can be repeated and replicated in other domains.
- **Congressional Engagement.** Send more member delegations to India to ensure up-to-date understanding of India’s evolving security needs, technology ecosystem, and domestic dynamics, and to reaffirm the United States’ commitment to the strategic partnership. Increase appropriations for SCA and the US Embassy Delhi to support visits by CODELs, STAFFDELs, US officials and other visitors. Military conflict contingency planning in the Indo-Pacific should routinely be part of all CODEL agendas.

²⁴ These ideas are largely drawn from Divyansh Kaushik, and Lindsey Ford, “How to Rebuild the US-India Relationship Through TRUST,” *The National Interest*, September 22, 2025, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/silk-road-rivalries/how-to-rebuild-the-us-india-relationship-through-trust>.

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