There is little question that Sino-Indian relations have deteriorated over the past decade. The two have clashed over a number of issues: China opposed the special waiver given by the Nuclear Supplier’s Group (NSG) to India to engage in nuclear commerce in 2008; repeatedly blocked subsequent Indian efforts to become a member of the NSG; continually prevented India’s efforts to include Masood Azhar, the head of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist group, as a UN-designated global terrorist; and has built closer ties with many of India’s smaller neighbors that India views as detrimental to its security. Similarly, India has refused to support China’s flagship international program, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); took an uncharacteristically strong stand in opposing China’s actions in the South China Sea; and is building a robust strategic partnership with both the United States and a number of its allies, which China views as an attempt to contain it. The worsening ties were underlined by an eyeball-to-eyeball standoff between Chinese and Indian military forces in the Doklam plateau, along the China-India-Bhutan trijunction, in the summer of 2017 that lasted several months.

What explains these worsening ties, especially considering that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi did attempt to improve relations with China in the early days of his government? One important argument in India’s domestic foreign policy debates over the last several years suggests that New Delhi is responsible for the current state of relations because of its growing closeness to the United States, to which Beijing is simply responding. If this is a valid proposition, then it would behoove India to adjust its policies to ensure friendlier and beneficial ties with an important and powerful neighbor. Indeed, it now appears that the Indian government has reached just such a conclusion and is attempting to reverse the recent downturn in Sino-Indian ties.1 New Delhi announced the
restarting of a Sino-Indian army exercise and official visits to China by both India’s Defense Minister and Foreign Minister, and held an informal summit between Modi and Chinese leader Xi Jinping at Wuhan in April 2018. The Indian government was even reported to have asked senior government functionaries to avoid going to events with the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual head of Tibet, to avoid irritating Beijing, and cancelled an annual conference planned by the government-funded think tank, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), in New Delhi because its theme might have upset China.

In addition, New Delhi also appeared to be signaling a more neutral stance between the United States and China, with Prime Minister Modi claiming in a major speech that India’s “friendships are not alliances of containment” and referring to “strategic autonomy,” a code word for nonalignment, which had disappeared from Indian diplomatic statements for a few years. Clearly, the Indian government appeared to be signaling that its own policies may have contributed to the downturn in ties and was willing to address China’s concerns, especially about India’s relationship with the United States.

Whether India’s new approach will succeed in improving Sino-Indian relations would depend on whether the perspective that it is based on—that China’s balancing policies toward India is a response to India’s growing closeness to the United States—is valid. If it is, the shift in India’s policy will likely succeed in improving Sino-Indian relations. If, however, China’s policy is rooted in factors other than just being a response to Indo-U.S. ties, then it would suggest that changing Indian policy may not have much of an impact on Sino-Indian relations. Indeed, there are at least two reasons to question the assumption that China is simply responding to Indian policy. First, China’s efforts to counter and balance India have been consistent, long-standing and predate the recent downturn in the relationship, suggesting that it is not responding simply to Indo-U.S. relations. Second, China’s recent pattern of more assertive policies toward India is part of a wider pattern that has targeted a number of Beijing’s neighbors, again suggesting it is not simply a response to India’s partnership with the United States.

The change in Indian policy since the Wuhan summit and the logic behind it has wider strategic ramifications than just the state of Sino-Indian relations. There is a concerted effort to develop strategic partnerships in Asia to balance China’s growing power and assertiveness, most of which assume a big role for India. Such efforts can be expected to face serious difficulties if India, one of the powers most capable of balancing China, proves to be unwilling to bear such burdens. India’s improving relations...
with other powers such as the United States, Japan, and Australia are also based on common concerns about China. These could suffer too if India decides that improving ties with Beijing requires New Delhi to go slow on these ties.

The next part of this essay briefly explores the debate about India’s China policy, especially the dominant Nehruvian liberal (Nehruvian, henceforth) perspective, which has an abiding faith in multilateralism and diplomacy while largely eschewing power.8 The subsequent section details the Nehruvian argument that closer U.S.-India relations is responsible for the downturn in Sino-Indian relations. The following section considers two missing factors in such analyses, in particular the historical dimension of China’s balancing efforts against India and the broader pattern of contemporary Chinese strategic policy, which suggests that China’s policies toward India may principally be neither about India nor India’s developing strategic partnership with the United States. The concluding section highlights some implications for Indian foreign policy.

India’s New China Debate

China’s power and proximity to India meant that Sino-Indian relations have always been a focus of debate in India’s foreign policy, going back to the original disagreement in the late 1940s between India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhai Patel, the then-Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister.9 Over the last decade, that debate has become much more intense, as China’s growing power has raised the prospect of greater competition between the two countries. Nonalignment 2.0, an influential foreign policy strategy paper prepared by a group of senior Indian analysts and practitioners, took China’s rise as its central organizing theme.10 As the authors noted, China “is the one major power which impinges directly on India’s geopolitical space,” calling it “the single most important challenge for Indian strategy in the years ahead.”11 This obviously should not be a surprise: China went from having an economy roughly the same size as India’s in the mid-1980s to being about five times as large as India’s today.12 With this growing power, China has also become a much more aggressive power, a key distinction between it and Japan’s rise in the 1980s.13

While there is little disagreement about the challenge China poses, there is much regarding how it should be handled. Very broadly, opinions on how India should manage China’s rise can be divided into three groups.14 Indian realists sees China’s rise as a potential danger that New Delhi should balance against, but given India’s relative weakness, they emphasize alliances rather than depending solely on domestic resources.15 Indian nationalists also emphasize balancing China but would prefer to depend on internal resources rather than pursue
international alignments.\textsuperscript{16} Nehruvians too accept that China is a challenge, but suggest that India hedge its bets until it becomes clear that China is the threat rather than the United States, and like the nationalists, they emphasize internal rather than external balancing.\textsuperscript{17} As the dominant perspective,\textsuperscript{18} the Nehruvians suggest that “India has to pursue a steady, patient course of diplomacy with China” because “India and China have a broad geopolitical interest in common, namely, to ensure that Asia does not become either an arena of conflict between Asian countries themselves or an object of Western influence once again.”\textsuperscript{19} Thus, there is some greater hope among Nehruvians that India and China would be able to find ways to cooperate. Indeed, just months before Sino-Indian ties nosedived in 2016 as a consequence of China blocking India’s entry into the NSG, Shivshankar Menon, a former National Security Advisor and Foreign Secretary, claimed that “we are at a moment of opportunity for India-China relations as a result of the rapid development of both countries in the last 30 years, of what we have achieved bilaterally in this period, and of the evolution of the international situation in the last few years.”\textsuperscript{20} Nehruvians also suggest that either China or the United States could be a threat: India should hedge so that “threatening behaviour by one of the major powers could encourage or even force it to be closer to the other.”\textsuperscript{21} In acknowledging this possibility, the Nehruvian contention is different from—and more accurate than—other arguments about Asian international politics that routinely use the concept of hedging but refer only to China as a threat.\textsuperscript{22} But such consideration also leads them to argue that prematurely picking a side will harm India’s choices: “If China perceives India as irrevocably committed to an anti-China containment ring, it may end up adopting overtly hostile and negative policies towards India, rather than making an effort to keep India on a more independent path.”\textsuperscript{23} On the other hand, even Nehruvians acknowledge China’s power and aggressiveness. As one scholar points out, “The combination of greater authoritarian resolve, nationalism, faith in one’s development model and immense ambition will make for a more assertive China. This is a diplomatic reality for Asia.”\textsuperscript{24}

**The Nehruvian Case**

Nehruvians posit that antagonizing China by joining an anti-China coalition is precisely the mistake India has made. They see the deterioration of Sino-Indian ties in the last few years as the consequence of disproportionately improving U.S.-India strategic relations. The disproportionality is critical: most of the
analysts who make these arguments are not suggesting that India should not have good relations with the United States but—as Nonalignment 2.0 noted—that India should “play the partnership game” with both, leveraging its attraction to both sides. 25 Explaining the title, the authors argue that the original Indian value of nonalignment should still “remain at the core” of India’s strategy, despite the changed global circumstances.

Thus, for many Indian analysts, it is the apparent imbalance in the India-U.S. and Sino-Indian relationship that is at issue. This argument is made in at least three variations: the first is in the assertion that Sino-Indian relations have worsened because of India’s growing closeness to the United States. One commentator argued that China’s attitude toward India began to change because the Modi government had either not understood China’s overtures, “or had decided to reverse the foreign policy of the UPA and its preceding three governments and edge into a closer embrace with the US.” 26 Others have argued that India has been tilting toward the United States since P.V. Narsimha Rao was Prime Minister (1991-1996). Some suggest India’s attempted containment of China through its alliance with the United States was part of the problem. 27 One analyst predicts that India cannot accommodate China because Indian elites think of the United States “as a future strategic benefactor and partner for India’s domestic transformation.” 28

As China seeks to offset U.S.-led coalitions, Beijing perceives that India, aligned with the United States, is acting as a spoiler to China’s strategic objectives, leading to Chinese efforts to counter Indian interests: “Denying India entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group, repeatedly blocking UN sanctions against Pakistan-based terrorists, and ignoring India’s sensitivity over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor are outcomes of this vision.” 29 As Srinath Raghavan, an Indian diplomatic historian and commentator, argues, “It is hardly surprising that China has taken unkindly to our strategic embrace of the US in this way. Beijing’s behaviour on a range of issues from NSG to Nepal is clearly an indication of the toughening Chinese stance towards India on things that they would otherwise have let pass.” 30 This means that it is up to India to correct its policies. As a former Indian Foreign Secretary argued, India should not allow “an adversarial relationship to slip into a corrosive ‘enemy’ mode,” implying that it was up to India to determine the state of the relationship. 31

The second form, a slight modification of the first, suggests that India is being manipulated by the United States in its efforts to counter China by driving a wedge between New Delhi and Beijing. In this version, it is not India’s strategy that is the problem but India being used in the pursuit of American objectives, wittingly or unwittingly. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, a prominent scholar and public commentator, argues that “the overblown rhetoric emanating from Washington about positioning India in its pushback of China will reduce our [Indian] options. It is not an accident that except for an odd country or two like the Philippines,
most Asian powers are still hedging. It does not suit our interests to jump the gun, as it were.”\(^32\) Fear that India will be coopted to serve American designs is a continuing trope in these writings. As Mehta points out in another essay, “It is one thing to combat China for your own reasons, and to even seek partnerships to do it; it is another to be mischievously co-opted in a narrative of Sino-American competition in Asia that is not your own.”\(^33\) This is a fear of not just Nehruvians, but also a section of the Indian center-right, who also argue that Sino-Indian problems are the consequence of “the unfriendly designs of extra-regional powers.”\(^34\)

The third form of this argument suggests that India is not particularly important to China, but that Sino-Indian ties are the victim of Chinese-American competition in Asia. Mehta makes the most sophisticated of these points. Writing in the context of India’s failed 2016 bid for membership in the NSG, primarily because of China’s opposition, he argues that Beijing’s opposition had little to do with India as such: India was “incidental.” Beijing’s real concern was the United States: Beijing wanted to “show that the US cannot claim hegemony over redefining the rules of the game.”\(^35\) As Mehta writes, “We [India] are victims in this instance of that great power jostling. But it is important to see this game for what it is; it is about more than us, and sheer narcissism will not get us to see that reality.”\(^36\)

All three are closely related arguments, but the central thesis of all is that India-U.S. ties are inversely related to Sino-Indian ties: the better the former, the worse the latter. The assumption behind this argument is that China is balancing India only because India is getting closer to the United States. The implication of this argument is also that India needs to follow a much more balanced approach to its relationship with these two great powers. It is not possible for India to improve relations with either China or the United States without it affecting India’s relations with the other. While some analysts explicitly link the deteriorating Sino-Indian relations to India’s increasing closeness to the United States, a broader argument also needs to be included in the same category, which is that India should deal with China directly on its own, rather than manage China in concert with other powers such as the United States and its allies.\(^37\) This is an indirect argument that also implies the same larger point: that closer strategic ties with the United States will negatively impinge on India’s relations with China.

Why India Did Not Lose China

It would be foolish to suggest that Indian policy has no effect on China’s behavior toward India. The real question is about the relative importance of Indian
behavior as opposed to other fundamental drivers of China’s behavior. If China is simply responding to Indian behavior, there should be greater variation in China’s, as it responds to changes in India’s approach. Alternatively, if there is evidence of greater consistency in China’s behavior, then it is unlikely that variations in Indian behavior—such as India’s increasing closeness to the United States and its allies in Asia—that is driving Beijing’s policies.

Nehruvians appear to assert that if India had not gotten closer to the United States, China would not be balancing against India. The assumption here is that China was not balancing against India earlier. While it is possible that China’s balancing efforts have been enhanced because of deepening India-U.S. relations, the history of consistent Chinese balancing against India suggests that China will not stop balancing India even if India distanced itself from the United States. In addition, the Nehruvian argument also ignores China’s growing assertiveness toward all of its neighbors. China’s recent aggressiveness is part of a general pattern of China’s foreign policy that has targeted many of China’s neighbors, and not just India. In other words, there are both temporal and spatial indicators to suggest that China’s policies are not simply a response to India’s actions but have other roots. I outline these two counterarguments below.

**The Long Roots of China’s Balancing of India**

A key problem with the thesis that China’s behavior is a response to India’s ties with the United States is the difficulty of squaring it with the long-standing roots of China’s attempts to balance India, which show little correlation to the state of U.S.-India relations. There are two points to be noted here: one, that China’s efforts to balance India had little to do with unfriendly Indian behavior, and two, it had little to do with the state of India-U.S. relations. And there is fairly strong academic consensus on these points, especially about the long history of China’s balancing against India.

As John Garver, an expert on China’s foreign policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology, notes in his well-received study of Sino-Indian relations, Sino-Pakistan entente, an effort to balance India, goes back to the period of Sino-Indian amity in the 1950s, deepened during the years of Sino-Indian hostility, and continued even as India and China improved relations in the 1990s. Garver notes, “Since almost the earliest days of the PRC, Chinese policy towards Pakistan has been based upon realistic power calculations deriving from extant or potential conflicts between China and India,” and China and Pakistan have had “a
remarkably durable relationship." As prominent Indian commentator Raja Mohan perceptively points out, “Although the world has always impinged upon the manner in which modern India and China have interacted with each other, the evolution of Sino-Indian relations has demonstrated a measure of autonomy that defied the principal patterns shaping international relations over the last few decades.” The more recent study of the Sino-Pakistan axis by Andrew Small, a researcher at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, also makes the same point about the depth, duration and consistency of China’s balancing of India, which has been the basis of Sino-Pakistan relations. Similarly, Jeff Smith, a specialist on South Asia at the Heritage Foundation, in another important recent work, argues that concerns about how China will react to closer U.S.-India ties is probably greater in India and the United States than it actually is in China itself.

It is particularly important to note that the deep and durable Sino-Pakistan relationship began in the 1950s, at a time when the Indian government under Nehru was attempting to demonstrate its commitment to building a strong partnership with China, in opposition to U.S. interests, and at a time when Pakistan was a member of U.S.-led anti-communist alliances that targeted China. There was little basis for this relationship between the two radically different powers other than balancing India. Pakistan’s desire for closer ties with China is understandable as a balancing effort against a stronger India it had already fought a war against and with which it had a continuing dispute, most seriously over the territory of Kashmir. But it is difficult to correlate China’s behavior with any Indian unfriendliness or the state of its relationship with the United States. If anything, India under Prime Minister Nehru (1947-1964) had expended considerable effort on the China relationship. This included Nehru refusing U.S. proposals to take China’s U.N. Security Council seat, and not only rebuffing a U.S. invitation to join various anti-communist alliances, but actively opposing and undermining those such as the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).

China’s balancing efforts understandably grew more concerted after the Sino-Indian border war of 1962. China’s alliance with Pakistan became so deep during this period that Garver suggests that China was fully ready to join the war against India in 1965. After India tested its first nuclear “device” in 1974, China’s assistance to Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program proved to be crucial in accelerating that program. China helped Pakistan build nuclear weapons for “righting the balance of power in South Asia, which seemed to be developing dangerously to China’s disadvantage.” China’s support for Pakistan’s missile programs was also important. Such support is a particularly significant marker not only for the strength of the relationship, but also for the intensity of China’s efforts to balance India because of the taboo attached to assisting nuclear weapons development and the rarity of interstate transfer of such technologies.
And though such technology transfer had more than one motive, an important one “was a desire to strengthen Pakistan against India.” As Small notes, “as in so many other areas, Chinese assistance to Pakistan helped to ensure that India would . . . be re-hyphenated with its other neighbor.” Garver too emphasizes the same motives for China’s nuclear technological support to Pakistan: first, militarily, it presented India with a second front; and second, politically, it hyphenated India with Pakistan instead of China.

Though Sino-Indian relations did improve in the period after Mao’s death in 1976, that did not significantly reduce China’s efforts to balance India, especially through the Sino-Pakistan alliance. Garver notes that during the 20 years between 1979 and 1999, India and China “both desired better bilateral relations and worked towards that goal.” But though Garver observes that China’s and India’s policies toward the smaller countries of South Asia were an obstacle to this goal, critically this was also the period when China transferred both nuclear and missile technologies to Pakistan. Garver also notes that such periods of cooperation in India-China relations have been “brief and problematic.” Moreover, even China’s improved relations with India after the Mao period was significantly (though not solely) the consequence of China wanting to balance against the Soviet Union. This has continued: after canvassing China’s South Asia scholars, Jeff Smith concludes that “even today Chinese analysts admit that the foundation of their regional policy is built on a desire to ‘maintain a secure balance’ in South Asia.”

This brief outline of China’s foreign policy toward India over the years suggests China has balanced against India for decades and actively promoted Pakistan as a counter. This had little to do with any generalized Indian hostility toward China and even less to do with India’s relations with the United States. Importantly, from the 1950s to the early 2000s, successive Indian governments had fairly poor relations with the United States. In fact, China and the United States jointly supported Pakistan against India during the 1971 Bangladesh war. Indeed, after 1971, China often had closer relations with the United States than India did, collaborating not only against the Soviet Union strategically but also actively supporting Pakistan against Soviet troops in Afghanistan, in collaboration with the United States.

This is why China’s long and consistent history of balancing against India outlined above is important: it demonstrates that there are other motives for Chinese behavior that need to be taken seriously. While it would be unsurprising if China’s balancing efforts have become more intense because of closer U.S.-India relations—indeed China could be expected to expend greater efforts to balance any enhancement of Indian capacities, including its internal ones—the long history of China’s balancing efforts suggests that Beijing would not stop even if
India distanced itself from the United States. Equally important is the more recent pattern of China’s behavior toward all of its neighbors, to which I turn now.

**China’s General Pattern of Aggressiveness**

Arguments about China’s new aggressiveness toward India being a response to India’s growing closeness to the United States ignores another crucial element: that China has recently acted more aggressively broadly, not just toward India. Indeed, there is a clear correlation between China’s growing power and its assertiveness against its far weaker neighbors across the entire region, rather than just against India. Across East and Southeast Asia, various nations are reacting to China’s new assertiveness, mostly by seeking to balance against it.\(^56\)

Though fear about China’s power has been prevalent for decades, China’s actual behavior toward its neighbors appears to have changed significantly only in the last 10 years, though the roots of this policy may lie farther back.\(^57\) Chinese activity in the region has been so aggressive that “[M]ost ASEAN states now see India’s defense presence in the northeast Indian Ocean in relatively benign terms and regard India as a net security provider,” a far cry from the 1980s when India’s naval modernization plans led to unease in the region. China’s buildup in the South China Sea is “now seen as a major destabilizing factor in the region.”\(^58\) Yong Deng, a specialist on China at the U.S. Naval Academy, argues that China has become a “post-responsible power” as it now sees efforts to make Beijing a ‘responsible stakeholder’ as a way of keeping it down. But “post-responsible China has become a lot more revisionist.”\(^59\) Though there were some early disputes among China-watchers about whether China has indeed become more assertive recently, there is now an overwhelming sense in the literature that it indeed has.\(^60\) In fact, Aaron Friedberg, a professor of International Affairs at Princeton University, suggests that “[F]ar from being over, the era of Chinese assertiveness appears to be entering a new, more complex, and potentially more challenging phase.”\(^61\) Indeed, much of the debate has moved beyond considering whether China is assertive to considering how China’s assertiveness can be countered.\(^62\) The consequence has been negative for China itself, as its neighbors seek to change their policies and build up their capabilities to better allow them to balance China.\(^63\)

Just a few examples should suffice to illustrate the general pattern of China’s more aggressive recent behavior toward its smaller neighbors. China’s approach toward Japan has become significantly more aggressive since 2010, with China...
escalating crises primarily, as MIT professor and China specialist Taylor Fravel argues, because of its weak position in the dispute. In 2016, Japan’s Defense White Paper warned China that its aggressiveness could precipitate war in the region. In Southeast Asia, the South China Sea disputes “are rapidly descending into a quagmire, with potentially explosive ramifications,” a typical analysis warned. Even potentially attractive Chinese initiatives, such as the infrastructure-heavy Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), are running into problems in Southeast Asia because of China’s heavy-handed tactics and boorish behavior. Indeed, part of the problem is that the tensions in the region are not being driven just by the security dilemma occasioned by China’s rise, but because “the pace and scale of Beijing’s military buildup, its tendency to dismiss other states’ concerns, and its low transparency about actual spending, capabilities, and intentions seem to be exacerbating regional tensions and, consequently threat perceptions vis-à-vis Beijing.” In other words, though China’s dramatic rise could itself have led to a security dilemma and competition even if China had behaved with some consideration and care toward its neighbors, China’s behavior has actually been pushing toward greater conflict.

Thus, the recent aggressiveness that China has demonstrated in its foreign relations is not something that is directed only at India. China’s foreign policy writ large has trended toward greater assertiveness. While its causes may be debatable, the relatively limited point at issue here is whether China’s behavior toward India is the consequence of Beijing responding to India’s strategic partnership with the United States or whether there are other factors at work. Given that this behavior is a general tendency, it is difficult to lay the blame for it at the feet of specific Indian policies, including India’s growing closeness with the United States.

**It’s Not about India**

It is tempting to believe that China’s policies toward India are simply a response to India building closer strategic ties with the United States. Though superficially logical, the argument that closer U.S.-India relations is responsible for the deteriorating state of Sino-India relations is ultimately unconvincing. It suggests a measure of agency: all India has to do is alter its policies in order to improve Sino-Indian relations. This also appears to be the conclusion that the government of India has reached. And it might not even be completely wrong: China’s policy toward India may partly be a reaction to how Beijing perceives India’s relations with the United States. It is possible that this makes China’s balancing behavior more intense. But it would be a mistake to place this at the heart of the explanation for China’s policies toward India. Both the long history of China’s efforts...
to balance India and the broad nature of China’s recent assertiveness suggest that such analysis is faulty. This suggests that India’s efforts to repair the relations, driven by the assumption that changing Indian policy toward the United States is what is required, will come to naught. The consequences of such a failure could also have additional negative implications for Indian policy, beyond just India’s objectives remaining unfulfilled.

There are at least three such implications, both specifically about India’s partnerships but also about the broader assumption that changing Indian behavior can improve Sino-Indian relations. First, such an assumption of Indian responsibility and agency could potentially reduce Indian readiness to prepare for both political disagreements and military conflict with China. The assumption that India could manage China and that high-level personal diplomacy was all that it would take for China to change its policy reportedly led Indian diplomats to launch a high-pitched campaign to enter the NSG in 2016, which failed. Indian defense budgets are also at historically low levels, again presumably based on the assumption that there is no serious military threat from China. But if China’s behavior is being driven not by Indian behavior but long-standing concerns about Indian power as well as a new aggressiveness in Chinese leadership toward the outside world, India may pay a heavy price for such misjudgment.

Second, if India mistakenly decides to limit its security cooperation with the United States because China objects—or worse, because of a mistaken assumption that China’s policy toward India is at stake—India will again pay a heavy price. India will neither be able to build up its own security capacity nor depend on U.S. diplomatic or political support to deter China. Much like India’s failed efforts under Nehru to woo China, this will leave India in the worst of all possible places-alone, facing a hostile and much more powerful adversary.

Finally, India’s mounting global profile is partly based on its growing power. Around China’s periphery, countries that perceive a growing threat from their giant neighbor are looking to India to correct the balance. Though India is perceived as somewhat less capable than China, countries such as France and the European Union are seeking closer ties with India, which they view as a more responsible global power. If India acquiesces to Chinese concerns over Indian partnerships, India could lose the support of those countries currently reaching out to India. India’s dependability would be seriously hurt by such unevenness of policy. Moreover, it would also likely diminish India’s strategic credibility with China.
because Indian behavior will be seen as lacking in resolve. This will, paradoxically, reduce India’s room to maneuver even more vis-à-vis China.

The Nehruvian perspective remains an important source of India’s foreign policy thinking. But many of their prescriptions are not likely to be any more effective or successful today than they were under Nehru. The triangular relationship between India, China and the United States remains a particular weak spot for Indian foreign policy because Nehrvians tend to be much more suspicious of the United States and much more considerate toward China, while also being overconfident of India’s abilities and importance. And India’s nationalists, including the current center-right BJP government, tends to share these sentiments. This does not bode well for India’s relationship with either China or the United States.

Endnotes:

18. Hall, “The Persistence of Nehruvianism in India’s Strategic Culture”; and Mehta, “Still Under Nehru’s Shadow?”


43. Garver, Protracted Contest, 203–204.

44. Small, The China-Pakistan Axis, especially chapter 2.

45. Garver, Protracted Contest, 327.


47. Garver, Protracted Contest, 237.

49. Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 188.
50. Ibid, 19.
51. Ibid, 6.
52. Ibid, 216–217.
55. Traditionally, balancing is only used to refer to countering stronger powers, but there is little logical reasoning why it should be constrained in this way. See, for example, Kai He and Huiyung Feng, “If Not Soft Balancing, Then What? Reconsidering Soft Balancing and U.S. Policy Towards China,” *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008): 363–395.
56. Lim and Cooper, “Reassessing Hedging.”

