



AIR Discussions (January 4th Week)

SPOTLIGHT

INDIA US STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW:

- Shared democratic values and growing convergence on bilateral, regional, and global issues have provided a strong base for India- U.S. relations, which have now evolved into a strategic partnership of global significance.
- The relationship enjoys strong bipartisan and popular support in both countries.
- India USA have seen ascendance of relationship in the 21st century, which was crystalised by 2008 India Nuclear Civil Nuclear Agreement.
- Various factors, including LPG reforms, rise of China, increasing influence of Indian community in USA are the factors behind this.

HIGH-LEVEL VISITS:

- Mutual visits at the leadership-level have been an integral element of the engagement between India and the U.S.
- Since assuming office in 2014, **PM has visited the U.S. on six occasions.**
- Events like **'Howdy, Modi!' in Houston** in 2019 have strengthened the partnership
- **President Trump visited India in February 2020 and President Obama visited India in January 2015** and participated in the Republic Day Celebrations.
- Apart from these visits, there have been a number of bilateral engagements at the leadership-level on the margins of multilateral events in other countries.

HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE MECHANISMS:

- India and the U.S. have **more than 50 bilateral inter-governmental dialogue mechanisms** for exchange of views on issues of mutual interest. A number of such dialogue mechanisms are held at the Ministerial level including:
 - **India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue:** India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue is led by the heads of foreign and defence ministries of India and the U.S. Two rounds of this Dialogue have been held so far.
 - **India-U.S. Commercial Dialogue:** The India-U.S. Commercial Dialogue is led by the Minister of Commerce and Industry (CIM) and the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.
 - **India - U.S. Economic and Financial Partnership:** The India - U.S. Economic and Financial Partnership is led by the Finance Minister (FM) and the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury.
 - **India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum:** The India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum is led by CIM and the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).
 - **India-U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership:** The India-U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership is led by the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and the U.S. Secretary of Energy.
 - **India-U.S. Homeland Security Dialogue (HSD):** The India-U.S. Homeland Security Dialogue is led by the Minister of Home Affairs and the Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILATERAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND THE U.S.

- **Defence:**

- Defence relationship has emerged as a major pillar of India- U.S. strategic partnership with intensification in defence trade, joint exercises, personnel exchanges, and cooperation in maritime security and counter-piracy.
- India conducts more bilateral exercises with the U.S. than with any other country. Some important bilateral exercises are: **Yudh Abhyas, Vajra Prahar, Tarkash, Tiger Triumph, and Cope India.**
- **Aggregate worth of defence-related acquisitions from the U.S. is more than US\$ 15 billion.**
- The **India-U.S. Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)** is aimed at promoting co-development and co- production efforts.
- In June 2016, the U.S. recognised India as a "**Major Defence Partner**", which commits the U.S. to facilitate technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.
- The announcement of India's elevation to **Tier I of the Strategic Trade Authorization (STA)** license exception will further contribute towards facilitating interaction in advanced and sensitive technologies.
- Apart from the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, some other important dialogue mechanisms on defence cooperation are: Defence Policy Group, Military Cooperation Group, Defense Technology and Trade Initiative etc.

- **Counter-terrorism and internal security:**

- The bilateral **Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism** is an important mechanism in this regard.
- Both sides have also been working together in law- enforcement and security cooperation through the **six subgroups under the HSD.**
- Apart from the above, both sides also cooperate with each other on counter-terrorism and security issues in various multilateral bodies.
- Cyber security cooperation between India and the U.S. is carried out under the India-U.S. Cyber Framework.
- The two important dialogue mechanisms in this domain are – **India-U.S. Cyber Security Dialogue and the India-U.S. Joint Working Group on ICT.**

- **Trade and Economic:**

- The U.S. is **India's largest trading partner, goods and services combined.**
- **Bilateral trade in goods and services grew by more than 10% per annum over the past two years to reach US\$ 142 billion in 2018.**
- India's goods exports to the U.S. were valued at US\$ 54 billion and India's goods imports from the U.S. were valued at US\$ 33 billion.
- India's services exports to the U.S. were valued at US\$ 28.7 billion and India's imports of services from U.S. were valued at US \$ 25.8 billion.
- U.S. direct investments in India are estimated at about US\$ 44.5 billion whereas Indian FDI in U.S. is estimated at US\$ 18 billion.

- **Energy:**

- The U.S. has emerged as a key partner for India in the field of energy.
- The **bilateral Strategic Energy Partnership** launched in 2018 is robust and witnessing increasing diversification across both conventional and renewable energy sources.
- An India-U.S. Natural Gas Task Force was also created.
- **India has started importing crude and LNG from the U.S. from 2017 and 2018 respectively.**



- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:**

- The **bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement** was signed in October 2008.
- India and the U.S. have a **Civil Nuclear Energy Working group on R&D activities**.
- A U.S. company - **Westinghouse is in discussions with Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL)** for implementation of a project that envisages six AP 1000 reactors at Kovvada (A.P.).

- **S&T/Space:**

- The multi-faceted cooperation between India and the U.S. in the field of Science and Technology has been growing steadily under the framework of the **India-U.S. Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement signed in 2005, renewed in 2019**.
- The **Indo-U.S. Science & Technology Forum** was established to promote cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation.
- Both countries also have a long history of cooperation in civil space arena that includes cooperation in earth observation, satellite navigation, and space science and exploration.
- The **India-U.S Joint Working Group on Civil Space Cooperation** regularly reviews the status of cooperation and identifies new areas for furthering space cooperation.
- **ISRO and NASA** are also working towards intensifying cooperation in Mars exploration, heliophysics, and human spaceflight through relevant working groups between both sides.

- **Indian Diaspora:**

- The number of Indians and Indian Americans in the U.S. is estimated at around **4 million, which accounts for almost 1% of the total U.S. population**.
- It includes a large number of professionals, entrepreneurs and educationists with considerable and increasing influence in U.S. polity, economy and the society.
- U.S. is one of the most favoured destinations by Indian students for higher education. **More than 200,000 Indian students are currently pursuing various courses in the U.S.**

- **Regional and International Cooperation:**

- Both countries are collaborating and coordinating on a number of regional and global issues in both security as well as development spheres.
- Both are also engaged in areas such as maritime and cyber security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.
- **The U.S. has expressed support for India's permanent membership on a reformed U.N. Security Council and for India's early membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.**
- India and the U.S. remain engaged to promote peace; prosperity; and security, in the Indo-Pacific as well as globally.



FOUR FOUNDATIONAL AGREEMENTS:

1. GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement):

- It was the first of the foundational agreements to be signed in 2002 during the visit of Defence Minister George Fernandes to Washington DC.
- It **guaranteed that the two countries would protect any classified information or technology that they shared.**
- It was aimed at promoting interoperability and laid the foundation for future US arms sales to the country.

2. LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement):

- It was signed in August 2016.
- LEMOA **allows the militaries of the US and India to replenish from each other's bases, and access supplies, spare parts and services from each other's land facilities, air bases, and ports, which can then be reimbursed.**
- To put the usefulness of this agreement in simple terms, it is like being able to stop at a friend's garage or workshop to refuel your car or get it repaired when you are far away from your own home or workshop.
- The signing of LEMOA was in itself an affirmation of the mutual trust between the two militaries, and its application will enhance the trust.
- While India had indeed provided ad hoc logistics support to the US in the past — such as allowing the refuelling of American aircraft in Bombay during the first Gulf War in 1991, and letting US warships visit Indian ports during the war on terror after 9/11 — the signing of LEMOA has institutionalised this process and made it smoother.

3. COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement):

- It was signed in September 2018, after the first 2+2 dialogue.
- The pact **allows the US to provide India with its encrypted communications equipment and systems so that Indian and US military commanders, aircraft and ships, can communicate through secure networks during both peace and war.**
- Again, to take a simple example, it's like being able to exchange messages or communicate with a friend on WhatsApp, Signal, or Telegram in real time and in a secure manner.
- It facilitates "interoperability" between their forces — and potentially with other militaries that use US-origin systems for secure data links.
- Because of the lack of this agreement, India had operated the US-made C-17s, C-130s and P-8I's with commercially available systems for nearly half a decade.

BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement):

- The BECA facilitates the provision of targeting and navigation information from US systems.
- It **will help India get real-time access to American geospatial intelligence that will enhance the accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones.**
- But, of course, having the data by itself doesn't guarantee accuracy; missile navigation systems must also be able to use this highly accurate data.
- Through the sharing of information on maps and satellite images, it will help India access topographical and aeronautical data, and advanced products that will aid in navigation and targeting.



- Besides the sailing of ships, flying of aircraft, fighting of wars, and location of targets, geospatial intelligence is also critical to the response to natural disasters.

FRICIONS IN INDIA USA RELATIONS

- **Trade related:** like removal of India from its list of developing countries and taking off India from list of beneficiary-developing countries under its scheme of Generalised System of Preferences.
- **Tariffs war:** In 2018, the US imposed additional tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium imports from various countries, including India, India's refusal to remove the 20% tariffs on ICT products.
- **WTO disputes:** like Capping prices of medical devices by India, greater Indian market access for American agriculture and dairy products etc.
- **IPR:** India is also on U.S.'s Priority Watch List.
- **H1B visas:** US has ramped up H-1B denials.
- **U.S.'s soft policy towards Pakistan and tensions with Iran, Russia and divergence of interests in Afghanistan.**

INDIA UNDER BIDEN ADMINISTRATION:

- There may be nostalgia for the Trump years in the corridors of power in India.
- The Modi government made no secret of its preference for another 4 years of Trump.
- However, relations between states are mostly determined by substantive interests involved. Leaders do make a difference. They may reinforce positive trends in the relations. They may dampen the effect of negative developments. They cannot alter the basic character of the relationship.
- The India-US partnership has been on an upward trajectory since the end of the Cold War and both Democratic and Republican administrations have contributed to this as have governments of different political persuasions in India.
- It is true that under Trump, India-US relations witnessed significant progress particularly in the areas of defence and counter-terrorism. But it is unclear how much Trump personally drove the process.
- In other respects, his unpredictability lent a degree of edginess to the relationship, particularly on trade related issues.
- **A Biden administration is welcome because there is at last a promise of a more "normal" governing dispensation in Washington, led by a President who is a confirmed consensus builder and whose commitment to healing his divided nation and promoting reconciliation enjoys credibility.**
- A US that seeks to recover its liberal credentials and repair its democracy back to health is good news for India.
- The foundations of Indo-US partnership are strong and are likely to be consolidated even further under Biden.

THE OTHER SIDE:

- On the other hand, every time there's a change of government in the United States, there is knee-jerk reflex in India. **The incoming administration is judged trivially by how many Indian-Americans are appointed to high positions.**
- American politics is historically divided into two schools and "styles" – paranoid and liberal. The former is angry, nativist, and exclusionary; the latter more openminded, inclusivist and inclined to engage with the outside world, and are represented by Trump and Biden, respectively. This is more of a rhetoric, rather than substance.



ANALYSIS:

- At the outset the word “strategic” is of a problematic nature in the Indian context because India seems to use the word “strategic” to describe friendly relations with other countries.
- Only two countries have truly had a strategic partnership with India; the USSR in the past and USA over the last ten years.
- For a strategic partnership to blossom, the presence of three factors is necessary. There must be 1) long term vision, 2) volume of exchange, 3) defense and security part or understanding.
- Indo-US relations had evolved since President Bush’s second term and then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was interested in operationalizing the strategic partnership.
- After the Obama visit, the ‘glass is a little fuller than before.’
- **Principal variables that would drive Indo-US relations in the future:**
 - China.
 - Pakistan and Terrorism.
 - Economics/Trade and finance.
 - Managing the global commons.
 - 7 Es: Economics, Ecology, Epidemics, Education, Ethnicity and emancipation, Energy, and Entente (coming together in the area of defence, space and technology).
- **Variables that would prove to be impediments to the growth of the Indo-US strategic partnership in the future:**
 - US domestic problems: Political disunity, protectionism etc
 - Fear of China’s rise at the cost of US power
 - India’s domestic problems: Issues such as Naxal insurgency, corruption, bureaucratic delays and anti-American feeling among certain sections of the Indian polity.
- **8 principal areas of Indo-US cooperation:**
 - Possible support for India in UNSC
 - US Entity List
 - Economic aspect of the relationship will also be crucial.
 - India getting US support for membership in four export control regimes
 - Pakistan-US relations
 - Counter-terrorism
 - India expects the US to advocate and support a greater role for India in Afghanistan.
 - Good relations with China and overcoming divergence between India and the US on Iran and Myanmar.

In a nutshell, the positive aspects of the relationship are: The civil nuclear cooperation agreement, defence framework agreement, endorsement of India for a permanent UNSC seat, reduction in the number of Indian entities on the US Entities List, major defence sales/acquisitions, counter terrorism cooperation, military interoperability, investments in infrastructure, and the economy in general, and significant people to people contact and exchange. The negatives of the Indo-US relationship are: disagreements on certain issues regarding the NPT, disarmament and the CTBT, disagreements about India’s nuclear liability bill, lack of agreement on issues regarding LSA, CISMOA and BECA, certain disagreements regarding counter terrorism, limits to India’s role in Afghanistan, America’s inability to pressure Pakistan to act against terrorist groups targeting India, allowing a significant role for China in South Asia, and disagreements on outsourcing.

SOURCES:



<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/will-into-us-ties-improve-under-biden-administration/articleshow/80560705.cms>

<https://idsa.in/event/IndoUSStrategicPartnershipAWayAhead>

<https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-india-relations>

<https://www.mea.gov.in>

PRELIMS: NEWS IN BRIEF

INDO-FRENCH ALLIANCE

- **2021: Year of Indo-French alliance towards a Greener Planet.**
- The Union Environment Minister, along with his French counterpart, launched the Indo-French Year of the Environment.
- The basic objective is to strengthen Indo-French cooperation in sustainable development, increase the effectiveness of actions in favour of global environment protection and give them greater visibility.
- The Indo-French Year of the Environment over the period 2021-2022 would be based on **five main themes**:
 1. Environmental protection
 2. Climate change
 3. Biodiversity conservation
 4. Sustainable urban development
 5. Development of renewable energies and energy efficiency

<http://newsonair.com/News?title=Indo-French-partnership-on-Environment-will-set-an-example-for-rest-of-the-world%2C-says-Environment-Minister&id=408819>

NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY

- **24th January** is celebrated as the National Girl Child Day every year in India.
- The day is an initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development started in 2008.
- The objective behind celebrating the National Girl Child Day is to provide all support and opportunities to the girls of the country.
- It also aims towards promoting awareness about the rights of the girl child and to increase awareness on the importance of girls' education, and their health and nutrition.
- **The National Girl Child day 2021 is being celebrated across the country with the objective of raising awareness on the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR).**
- The celebrations also mark the anniversary of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme.



<http://www.newsonair.com/News?title=%26%2339%3BNational-Girl-Child-Week%26%2339%3B-being-observed-from-today-to-26th-of-this-month&id=408408>

11TH NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY (NVD)

- **25th January** is celebrated as National Voters' Day in India to mark the formation of the Election Commission of India on this day in 1950.
- The theme for this year's NVD, '**Making Our Voters Empowered, Vigilant, Safe and Informed**', envisages active and participative voters during elections.
- It also focuses on ECI's commitment towards conducting elections safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The National Voters' Day has been celebrated on January 25 every year since 2011.
- **The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize enrolment, especially for the new voters.**
- **This year on the occasion, the President launched the ECI's web radio, 'Hello Voters'- online digital radio service will stream voter awareness programmes and e-EPIC-the digital version of the Elector Photo Identity Card.**

<http://newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=408620>