

## Indo-US Strategic Partnership: Emerging Trends

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### Abstract

*For expansion of strategic ties with India, the US had set-aside nuclear sanctions upon India in 2001 and started to normalize bilateral relations. Indo-US relations had started to expand in economic, energy and technological fields since the early phase of 21st century. India and the US signed the strategic partnership to meet the existing and coming global challenges of 21st century. The nuclear cooperation, defence collaboration, growing strategic ties, convergence on maritime security and common concern towards global terror has been emerging as new trends of Indo-US strategic partnership. As per as the India's regional image was transferred into global image, the US had started side-lining Pakistan status as a front-line state. After the 9/11 incident, terrorism remained a principal global threat. The US administration has threatened to Pakistan for flourishing of terrorism. This paper examines the emerging trends of Indo-US strategic partnership and highlighted the shared interests that turned-up the page of Indo-US relations and accordingly Washington started to classify New Delhi as a crucial collaborator in the 21st century. The paper also points out the strategic importance of India in the American view that can better protect the US strategic interests in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. Key Words: Strategic, Relationship, Cooperation, Counter*

### Introduction

The relationship between India and the US has gone through several ups and downs in the Cold War era. Indo-US relations have improved dramatically after the disintegration of Soviet Union. The two nations have enhanced their bilateral relationships in accordance to new security architecture. The US praised India's new economy policy and showed its interest towards India. Pakistan dramatically loosed its importance in the eyes of Washington based policy-makers. The Indo-US armed rapport began in January 1992 for the duration of the Narasimha Rao regime. An Indo-US Army Executive Steering Committee was established. This was followed by the setting-up of the Joint Steering Committee of the two navies of both countries. Joint naval exercise was conducted in 1992. The Joint Steering Committee of two air forces was set-up in 1994. India and the US initiated 'Malabar Exercise' in 1992 to develop navy to navy cooperation. The Kick-lighter Proposals was proposed to expand military to military cooperation between the two countries. An *Agreed Minute on Defence Cooperation* was signed in 1995 flanked by the two nations. It was formally started the Indo-US defence cooperation.

India's stance on CTBT has irked the American policy-makers. In 1998, India's nuclear explosions have sidelined the American Non-proliferation agenda. Indo-US relations have touched new lows after the culmination of Pokhran II nuclear explosions. The Clinton administration took a neutral stand during Indo-Pak war in 1999. Singh-Talbot dialogues were scheduled to reshape Indo-US ties. Indo-US strategic relations have expanded in new century. The American President Clinton visited India in 2000 and two countries showed their interest in strategic convergence. For the duration of

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Clinton's visit to New Delhi in 2000, the two countries signed 'Indo-US Relations: A Vision for 21st Century'. Consequently, Indo-US relations have considerably enhanced after the Clinton's visit. Yet, Clinton administration hyphenation policy has always irked the Indian policy-makers. The Jaswat-Talbot dialogues were concluded with good strategic understanding between the two nations.

Following the 9/11 incident, the Bush administration perceived India as a neutral ally to contain global terror. After the 9/11, terrorism was then emerged as a broader area of mutual convergences between the two nations. The Bush administration started de-hyphenation policy in relations regarding to India. There are common defence interests, primarily the concerns about Chinese armed dominance and the post-9/11 Islamic terror campaign security hazard. The Indian Diaspora progressively influenced the Washington based policy-makers and with the intention of to enlarge relations between the two countries. Then, Pakistan was gaining its importance again because America needed Pakistan to implement operations in Afghanistan. India supported American war on terror strategy.

In January 2004, India and America strong-willed to enlarge collaboration in three definite areas: **civilian nuclear area, civilian space cooperation programme and high technology area**. The two countries signed 'Next Steps of Strategic Partnership' in 2004. The NSSP was proposed to enlarge strategic understanding between the two nations. The two sides have affirmed 'New Framework of Defence Relationship' in 2005 to enlarge defence cooperation. It was relevant for next 10 years. The Bush administration seeing India as a strategic collaborator for restraint of aggressive China. Therefore, America offered 123 civil nuclear assignments to India. Thus, India and the US signed 123 civil nuclear agreements in 2008. The 123 nuclear agreements could end India's nuclear isolation of 34 years. Nevertheless, there were some disagreements on 123 civil nuclear agreement. There were some domestic concerns of nuclear pool, compensation issues and technology transfer. The two countries initiated Strategic Dialogue in 2009, which covered five areas and completed with five phases in 2014. India is actively supporting American 'Pivot Asia' policy. The US President Obama visited India in January 2015 and two countries avowed 'Joint Vision for Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean'. It implicated that maritime security is equally important for India and the US. Modi and Obama showed their vision to maintain maritime security in South China Sea and Indian Ocean Sea. The two nations signed Logistic Support Agreement in 2016 and America designated India as a major defence partner. There are emerging various trends in Indo-US strategic partnership in the 21st century. There is need to explain it in broader form. There are as above;

#### **Upswing in Defence Cooperation:**

Indo-US defence relations have improved in post-Cold War era. The two nations defence cooperation has reached new heights in the 21st century. The two countries have been deepening their defence ties day by day. India and the US have been engage in military to military exercises. The Defence Policy Group was formed by the two nations along with it focused priorities for defence cooperation, reviews progress annually and directs adjustments etc. India and the US signed 'New Framework of Defence Relationship' in 2005 and it was renewed in 2015 for next ten years. It was introduced to enlarge defence arms trade and defence cooperation. The new defence framework will improve two-sided defence joint venture and as well stepping-up common armed drills and from side to side more in-depth intelligence-sharing, maritime security efforts between the two nations. Indo-US Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI) was signed in 2012 to promote partnership on defence technology and enabled co-production and co-development of vital defence arsenals. The US is providing more defence arms to India than ever before. Growing terror threats and Chinese emergence are the basic reasons behind the growing Indo-US defence cooperation. America is

providing more arsenals to India to contain Chinese growing assertiveness. Therefore, Obama administration designated India as a major defence partner in 2016. India and the US arranged in standard to practise joint development and production of defence arsenals. Trump administration is interested to sell unarmed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and aeroplane upstairs hallway system for helicopter carriers to India. Trump administration has showed its interest to strongly support transfers of F-18 and [F-16](#) fighter Jets to India. Obama administration undertakes the utmost number of combined exercises with India amongst all nations that take account of the navy-to-navy Malabar and SALVEX exercise, army-to-army Yudhabhyas exercise and aerial 'Cope-India' exercises. Thus, defence cooperation has been emerged as a major trend of Indo-US strategic partnership.

#### **Enlarging Nuclear Cooperation:**

Indo-US nuclear relations have enhanced noticeably in the new century. Bush administration has put to one side nuclear sanctions in opposition to India in 2001. The framework for Indo-US nuclear agreement was proposed by Manmohan-Bush joint statement on July 18, 2005. India granted to divide its civil and military nuclear facilities and to place all its civil nuclear amenities in accordance to [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) [IAEA] rule and direction. Following the signing of 123 civil nuclear deal, India's nuclear isolation was ended. The nuclear deal ending India's departure by the western world in the nuclear and space pitch. The deal has prearranged to boost to India's nuclear energy production. The 123 nuclear agreement would enable India to acquire civil nuclear technology from America and other members of world community. This agreement provides de-facto nuclear status to India. It was overtake the barriers of American technology transfer to India.

#### **Growing Strategic Ties:**

Clinton administration showed their interests to expand strategic ties with India. Bush administration dealt India as a strategic cohort to restrain Chinese threats. During the Obama term, Indo-US strategic collaboration has crossed its limits. Indo-US nuclear deal is first sign of growing strategic ties. Indo-US strategic partnership has been started in 21st century. The two nations signed 'Next Steps for Strategic Partnership' in 2004 to enlarge strategic cooperation. The Indo-US Energy Dialogue was started on May 2005 to broaden strategic ties. Indo-US strategic partnership focused on trade and investment, security and defence, education, science and technology, cyber security, high-technology, civil nuclear energy, space technology and maritime safety measures. America is reinforcement strategic ties with India to restrain Chinese assertiveness. India wants American cooperation to contain China-Pakistan nexus. India and the US initiated Strategic Dialogue in 2009. The Indo-US Strategic Dialogue determined five key areas for close cooperation and over and done with in 2014 with five phases. The Indo-US Strategic Dialogue focused on strategic cooperation; energy and climate change, education and development, trade and agriculture, Science and technology, health and maritime security. At that moment, India and the US have intensified and long-drawn-out their strategic consultations dealing East Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. The two countries have strategic security dialogue covering matters relating to international security and disarmament and multilateral export control regimes. America has launched a 'pivot to asia' policy in 2011 to strategically containing China. India has been energetically opinionated American contain China strategy. Trump administration has been strengthening strategic ties with India to contain emerging security threats.

#### **Counter-Terrorism Cooperation:**

Terrorism is emerged as a big threat to worldwide safety. The two sides formed 'Indo-US Joint Counter-Terrorism Working Group' in 2000. It was introduced to enlarge cooperation on growing

threat of terror. After the 9/11, terror has been emerged as a big area of mutual cooperation. The US introduced 'war on terror' strategy and India showed its support to American war against terrorism. The US rebuked Pakistan to sponsoring 11/9 in Mumbai in 2008. Following the 11/9, Bush administration criticized Pakistan to provide safe-heavens to terrorists. Due to Indian pressure, Washington is pressuring Pakistan on state sponsoring terror. The two countries affirmed the Indo-US Counter Terrorism proposal in 2010. The two nations are sharing intelligence to contain terror threat. Trump administration supporting India in United Nations on terror issue. Thus, emerging threats of terror has been proved a big area of mutual cooperation between the two nations.

#### **Growing Convergence on Maritime Security:**

Maritime security has been emerged a big area of mutual convergence. India actively joined 'Malabar Exercise' with US since 1992. The Malabar Exercise was launched to enlarge navy to navy cooperation between the two nations. The two countries have been signed 'Maritime Security Cooperation' in March 2006. Modi and Obama had affirmed joint vision for Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean in January 2015. The two leaders shared their interest for rule based global maritime architecture. The US has welcomed India's important and effectual position on issues relating to maritime security. America is feeling 'strategic unease' due to growing Chinese assertiveness in Indian Ocean and South China Sea. It is noted that Chinese maritime assertiveness has been threatening regional security. China is making strategic port in international water and it will block the entry of littoral countries in global Seas for navigation and trade purposes. India and the US have common unease towards Chinese forcefulness in global Seas. India and the US shared their common vision towards maritime security. America wants to continue to work with India to develop mutual capabilities to make-out challenges in the naval sphere of influence. The two countries have been countering piracy threats in global maritime domain and America perceived India's competence and ability to play a part in counter-piracy operations.

#### **Shared Vision on Chinese Emergence:**

China is asserting not only regional platform but also global platform. China is also asserting in global Seas. China is countering Indo-US common strategic interests. America perceived China's rise as a security threat, therefore, Washington wanted India's support to countering Chinese growing emergence. China's emergence has been posing concerns for Indo-US alliance. Chinese global aspirations are countering India on regional platform and threatening America on global platform. It is mention to note that Indo-US joint military exercise targeting Chinese emergence. There is a shared concern over the supremacy of China, an up-and-coming superpower that is giving indications of being an unsettling power, not charmingly taking its position in open global order.

Immigration has been emerged a big divergence between the two nations. Trump Administration has showed its tough stand towards illegal immigration. Trump Administration targeted Indians by new immigration policy of US. Trump administration immigration views dishearten India's technocrat. Indian Diaspora also frightened by new immigration guiding principle of Trump Administration.

India needs to consider that American policy makers on no account do a thing in opposition to the interests of its corporate and military strategists. America does not let-down to its interests but India had to bend over to their whims and fancies. India has done the right by signing the Logistic Support Agreement with the US. It will counter and neutralize the threat posed by China and Pakistan in South Asia and Indian Ocean. India, alone will not be capable to check the aggression designs of China, proxy Pakistan. International relations change over the time depending on the ground reality. At the

moment, economical compulsion and sanctions have forced Russia to bend over more towards China than India.

### Conclusion

It can be said that Indo-US relations have broader prospects than problems. Both the countries want to enhance strategic partnership at regional as well as global level. Indo-US strategic partnership has focused to minimize 21st century security challenges, which is faced by humanity in the recent time. After the US operation in Abbottabad (Pakistan) in May, 2011, the US marked Pakistan as a terror safe heaven. After the Osama assassinated in May 2011, the US changed its approach towards Pakistan and took tight stand towards Pakistan based terror. The US assured India to share critical information to combat terror. Both the countries marked terror as common threats.

Yet, India has some suspicions about the newly appointed US President Donald Trump's futuristic policies. Trump's trade and visa uncertainty and protectionism policies will pose some divergences between India and the US. But it is strongly believed that Trump will not irritate India with its uncertain behaviour and ease-out bilateral tensions through coordinating ways. Nevertheless, it is not very unambiguous whether the Trump Administration would follow a policy of strategic engagement with India in a more effective manner. More hopes are on Modi and Trump that together the two largest democracies of the world will crack down all hurdles and work towards mutual understanding. In the long term, Indo-US strategic relationship needs to engage with the next generation of the leaders of both countries. Thus, India and the US have already given priority to re-define the bilateral relationship in the forthcoming years. A re-evaluation of policies from both sides will help to build the foundation for a mutually beneficial relationship that will bolster the partnership between the two great nations.

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