

India USA Relations in the 21st century

Ankit Kumar

Research Scholar, Amity Institute of Social Sciences, Amity University, Noida

ABSTRACT

The divergence of cold war between India and USA got replaced with perpetual convergence in the 21st century. The two countries not only converge but their significant agreements in the 21st century makes them strategic partner as well. The strengthening of relations is attributed due to their common adversary i.e. China. This paper makes an attempt to examine the emerging cooperation between India and USA. The cooperation between the two countries is not only comprehensive but also venture into different areas as well. The defense cooperation between the two commence with civil nuclear deal 2005 and recently the two signed BECA as well. Notwithstanding this only, a significant boost is also evident in the economic ties as well. This paper also seeks to examine the factors facilitating convergence between the two countries. Though the relations achieve numerous strides in the 21st century, however the relations between the two is not free from suspicion as well. A large part of this paper is also dedicated to examine the irritants between India and USA. USA being the super power and India being an emerging and potent player in Indo Pacific region is complementing each other interests and helps each other to achieve their respective endeavour as well.

Keywords: LEMOA, BECA, Strategic, CAATSA, Convergence.

INTRODUCTION

The divergence of India USA relations though ends up with the disintegration of USSR, however the advent of 21st century saw relations between the two got strengthen perpetually. Jeff M. Smith argues that the transformation of the Indian–U.S. relationship has been one of the great U.S. foreign policy success stories of the past two decades. Estranged democracies during much of the Cold War, India and the United States have, since the turn of the millennium, constructed one of the defining strategic partnerships of the 21st century (Smith, 2019). The increasing closeness of the Indo-US relationship over the last quarter of a century is therefore a pan-partisan trend. Even so, in his first two years at the helm since May 2014 Modi brought about a qualitative change in the relationship. Some even argue that a ‘fundamental transformation’ in the Indo-US relationship is under way. From resolving the prickly issue of civil nuclear energy cooperation to significantly upgrading defence cooperation, and in arriving at a common understanding on a range of international issues, Indo-US relations seem to have reached an ‘extraordinarily good place’ (Joshi and Pant, 2017).

The growing convergence between India and USA is attributed due to numerous factors as the emergence of 21st century has witnessed the shift of world order from Atlantic towards IndoPacific and the strategic location of India in the region makes it an ideal partner of USA in the region. Moreover, the growing USA China rivalry also give some sort of boost to India USA relations as USA consider India as an ideal swing state etc. It is true that the relations between the two countries have achieved numerous strides as it is said that the two countries enjoying unprecedented levels of cooperation in the economic, strategic, and diplomatic spheres. However, the relations are not fully free from suspicion as well.

This paper seeks to examine the growing convergence between India and USA in the 21st century and the factors for convergence. Moreover, it also seeks to examine the irritants in the India USA relations and the future prospects of India USA relations as well.

THE EMERGING COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND USA RELATIONS

The India USA convergence can be seen at numerous front and which finds its explicit mention in the emerging Cooperation between the two in the 21st century. The relations between the two countries grows multidimensionally. The relationship between the United States (US) and India in the defence sector has proven to be one of their most resilient and high-value. The signing of ‘New Framework for India-US Defence Relations’ in June 2005 marked the full-scale start of defence cooperation between India and the US. It intensified defence trade, joint exercises, personnel exchanges, collaboration and cooperation in maritime security and counter-piracy, and cooperative exchanges between the armies, navies and air forces of the two countries (Mishra, 2023). After India signed its first “foundational” military agreement with the U.S. in 2002—a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)—the Modi government quickly inked three more in 2016, 2018 and 2020. The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Understanding (LEMOA) allows the militaries of both countries access to each other’s facilities for refuelling and replenishing while the Communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) allows the sale and exchange of encrypted communications data and equipment between the countries.(BECA)Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement will provide the Indian military with high quality GPS which will improve the accuracy of its automated systems and other guided weapons like missiles and armed drones. Defence benefits aside, the BECA will also give the required geospatial intelligence that will be crucial for an effective response towards natural disasters (Smith, 2019). Furthermore, the two countries also involved in lot many bilateral and multilateral military exercises.

Another significant area of cooperation which strengthened the ties between the two countries is the economic cooperation. The relations between India and USA during cold war was not cordial and one such reason for this was the import substitution model of economic growth adopted by India. However, with the demise of USSR and internal economy situation insist India to adopt market economy model which implicitly contributed to strengthen India’s ties with USA. The trade relations between the two starts growing gradually and now USA is one of the biggest trading partners of India. In 2019-2020, it was India’s single largest trade partner, accounting for almost US\$ 89 billion (11 percent of India’s total) in two-way goods trade. It is the fifth-largest source of incoming foreign direct investment(Jaishankar,2021). US investments in India have soared — from a total of US\$7.7 billion in 2004, to US\$28 billion in 2017; the India-US bilateral trade has nearly tripled from US\$36 billion in 2005 to US\$104 billion in 2014, with an aim to reach US\$500 billion in trade. The Modi government also stepped-up to demonstrate its growing market and booming economy (Khan, 2017).

Furthermore, both the countries shared similar view of free open and secure IndoPacific region. Notwithstanding this only both the countries consider China as their potential adversaries in the region. Besides,both nations declared their support for freedom of navigation in the South China Sea in their joint statement, signaling that the Modi government is not hesitant to highlight New Delhi’s

convergence with Washington on regional issues. The United States also expressed its willingness to enhance technology partnership with the Indian Navy (Pant, 2017).

Another significant area of cooperation between India and USA is maritime security cooperation. Both the countries agreed to include the conclusion of a “white shipping” technical arrangement to improve data sharing on commercial shipping traffic and navy-to-navy discussions on submarine safety and anti-submarine warfare. India sees China as being heavily invested in establishing its presence as an economic superpower across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and even Europe, as well as the Indian Ocean region (IOR) — long seen as India’s sphere of strategic influence (Khan, 2017).

India and US are cooperating in outer space domain since 1963. US and India are having myriad joint statements and strategic agreement to ameliorate the strategic cooperation. These agreements include “Next Step in Space Partnership 2004 (NSSP), New Framework for India-US Defence Relationship 2005, India-US civil nuclear deal 2005, Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and IOR etc” (Goswami, 2020). US and India increased their civil space cooperation through US-India Joint Working Group (JWG). NSSP pertained to civil space cooperation. US and India conducted three space security dialogues (i.e., 2+2 dialogues of 2018, 2019 and 2020), and both states are having JWG for Mars and lunar space exploration (Khalid, 2021).

FACTORS FACILITATING EMERGING COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND USA

The changing dynamics of world order and the geo strategic vitality of India in the new world order is one of the primary reason for the growing convergence between India and USA. Besides, the rise of China and its prompt economic strides in the recent pass makes it a common adversary for India and China. Moreover, the Democratic credentials as India being the world’s biggest democracy and USA being the world oldest democracy is another factor responsible for elevating their strategic ties as well.

India and USA have also adopted the similar stand against counter terrorism which also has its role in strengthening the ties between the two countries. It is said that the Post 9/11, the area of counter-terrorism acquired great focus for both India and the US, and has become a key area of cooperation. After Mumbai attacks in 2008, the India-US counterterrorism cooperation Initiative was meant to promote intelligence sharing and capacity building activities, which led to the establishment of the first Homeland Security Dialogue in 2011 (Khalid, 2021).

In addition to these, Individual leadership has also played a major role in facilitating enhanced Indo-U.S. ties. Various Indian and American leaders have made significant contributions in this regard. For instance, the decision by Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh to break with India’s autarkic development strategy and begin moving toward market reforms facilitated the growth that has made India such a valuable economic partner for the U.S (Ganguly & Kapor, 2007). Since the Modi government came to office in Delhi, there is a renewed effort in both India and the United States to strengthen ties. Modi has articulated a vision of U.S.–India ties as a relationship between equals: if the United States has a unique ability to absorb people from all parts of the world, he argues, Indians too have a unique ability to become an integral part of the various societies to which they migrate, contributing to them in substantive ways. It is Modi’s confidence in India’s economic future and the U.S. corporate sector’s confidence in Modi’s stewardship of the Indian economy that has already

resulted in investments worth \$41 billion into India over the next 3 years—and this is only 20 percent of what is expected from the United States (Pant, 2017).

America's vast military and economic support for India's archival, Pakistan, was once among the most divisive issues in Indo–U.S. relations. No longer. USA has adopted a considerably tougher posture toward Pakistan, reflecting years of building frustration with Islamabad throughout Washington (Smith, 2019).

CONSTRAINTS IN THE INDIA USA RELATIONS

The U.S.–India partnership has been steadily losing momentum in the last few years. After the December 2013 arrest and strip-search of Devyani Khobragade, India's deputy consul general in New York, relations took a nose dive— Khobragade was accused of lying to U.S. officials about the payment terms for a domestic worker she brought from India to work in her residence, in order to obtain an employment visa for the woman (Pant, 2017). It is also argued by many that a divergence could emerge regarding U.S. policy toward China. USA hopes that greater Indian economic and military prowess will offer a useful hedge against expanding Chinese power. India, for its part, also has reason to fear increased Chinese capabilities and ambitions. Nonetheless, India will formulate its China policy primarily from the standpoint of Indian interests. As a result, U.S. and Indian objectives vis-à-vis China may not always be compatible. If the U.S. assumes that they must be so, this could lead to discord over the long term (Ganguly & Kapur, 2007).

The Indo-US relations have historically remained on a zigzag path with more downs and less ups, since the non-aligned foreign policy. The new Indian posture has altered the ritualistic idea of non-aligned India. As a result, India has moved strategically closer to the US, which in return, propelled Moscow to forge closer ties with China and to build new relationships with the Taliban and Pakistan. The Indo-Russia fall-out is a concern for many in New Delhi as it was the longest international alliance during the Cold War (Khan, 2017). Many in the United States feel a sense of betrayal that, after investing significant diplomatic capital in getting the civil nuclear deal through, India has reciprocated with a 2010 nuclear liability law that has made it virtually impossible for U.S. nuclear operators to operate in India. This law does not cap liability for nuclear suppliers, which has prevented the U.S. civil nuclear industry from yet entering the Indian market (Pant, 2017).

In addition, the potential irritants for India USA relations are the CAATSA sanction as it is said that the CAATSA sanctions to become a major irritant in bilateral relations, the 2019 NDAA contained a provision expanding the U.S. President's ability to waive or delay sanctions in certain circumstances. However, CAATSA still risks creating both immediate and longer-term challenges (Smith, 2019). There is a lack of overall coherence in the military relationship, such as a common vision or guidelines defining the way organizations should identify priorities or build engagement plans. The organizations responsible for the different components of the relationship base their decisions on different matrices, priorities, and requirements. Each develops and implements its program with little understanding of how its decisions and activities might affect the overall relationship (Raymond, 2006).

The sharpest and most immediate challenges now confronting India and the U.S. relate to trade, which is perhaps ironic considering that the bilateral trade in goods reached an all-time high in 2018, while U.S. exports to India, including crude oil exports, are surging, shrinking the U.S. trade deficit (Smith, 2017).

Moreover, India threatened to go to the World Trade Organization if Washington enacted the immigration bill, which includes stringent provisions targeting Indian IT companies that have been sending workers to the United States on H1-B visas (Pant, 2017). Furthermore, the scope and methods of exchanging information concerning terrorism, nuclear and bio-related terrorist activities, arms smuggling, piracy, counter-narcotics, and disaster related capabilities are limited (Raymond, 2017). It is explicit that the relations between India and USA is underwent transformation in the post-cold war. However still the relations between the two could achieve strides if policy formulation is done by keeping these irritants to due consideration.

CONCLUSION

India USA despite achieve numerous strides in the 21st century still have lot to accomplish in the contemporary global politics. USA being the super power and India being strategic partner in the Indo Pacific can shape the world by strengthening their bilateral ties as well. However, in order to achieve their desirable objectives India USA, require to perpetuate the proactiveness in their relation. In addition to this, mechanisms should also be devised to resolve the irritants. It's is also said that, considering the vitality of India,USA should navigate CAATSA differences and reformthe Legislation wherein some sort of relaxation should be provided to India. Furthermore, it is said that Modi Biden era could resolve certain issues which erupt during Trump regime and have ramifications for the bilateral ties between the two as well.

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