	Open Access Research Article
	Volume: 23 Issue: 05
	May, 2023

India and USA Relations

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Abstract: From fearing American Imperialism to strategic partners today, India and USA have travelled long path. This paper talks about the changing trends in India & USA relationship from Independence till today, and the Fundamental shift that has occurred during the past decade. India-USA bilateral partnership today encompasses a whole host of issues including political co-operation, defense and security, Counter terrorism and internal security, cyber security, trade and economic relations, energy and climate crisis, sustainable development and people to people contacts. All these shared values and common interests makes our relationship unique. This article also talks about the reasons of neutral dependency of India and USA on each other and what are challenges still persisting which are blocking relations and then this article briefly discusses the areas in which both countries can engage in future.


The great problem of the near future will be American Imperialism, even more than British Imperialism. India is today embarked on a journey inspired by many dreams; we welcome having America by our side. There is much we can accomplish together. Shift from 1st statement to II statement in 60 years describes transformation in relations between India and United States of America. In this period the world's oldest democracy and world's largest democracy failed to understand each other. In the past 2 decades fundamental shift has occurred. This paper explores the shift in relations.

Historical Overview

In 1940's The Americans viewed the world through the prism of anti-communism while India republic viewed the world through prism of anti-imperialism. This thinking produced perception – "Those who are not with us are against us." Jawahar Lal Nehru propagated principle of non-alignment under which India refused to join either the capitalistic vs. or the communist Soviet Union. US viewed non alignment policy of India diverging from its own interests. So, at that time Pakistan enjoyed close relationship with the US due to its strategy importance to the US policies regards to Soviet Union and Afghanistan.

In 1962 as Sino Indian war depended, Nehru Started seeking assistance from western powers. US provided assistance by directing any American carrier, the enterprise to the Bay of Bengal. In 1971, Pakistan made suppressive policies on against the people of east Pakistan (new Bangladesh) US at that time was not supportive of India's assistance for the formation of Bangladesh. So, there were diplomatic tensions between the two countries. In 1971, Americans started building relations with China which was facilitated largely by Pakistan. So, after this India officially turned to Soviet Union for assistance. In 1971, war broke out between Indian Pakistan, this time US dispatched its enterprise to Bay of Bengal but this time in support of Pakistan. After this India signed Treaty of peace friendship and cooperation with Soviet Union.

In 1974, India conducted its 1st Nuclear weapon test at Pokhran, Rajasthan. This was seen as hostile move. In 1980's there were closer ties between US and Pakistan to counter Soviet Union in Afghanistan so large amount of military aid was pumped into Pakistan by USA in order to fight Soviet Union. This created internal security tensions in Indian.

	Open Access Research Article
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In 1990, India provided logistical support for American military operation in the Gulf war. Post 1991 cold war ended. Soviet Union disintegrated into independent nations and USA emerged as the single largest hegemon, making the world unipolar from bipolar. At the same time from the closed economy, India became open economy.

Liberalisation of the Indian economy saw increasingly close ties between India and USA. After that trade between India and USA flourished. In 1998 again India tested its nuclear devices and badly damaged its relations with USA. In 2000 the USA President visited India and ended the estrangement of past 1998 Indian nuclear weapon tests. In 2001, USA lifts all the remaining sanctions that were imposed on India after its 1998 nuclear test. In 2002 General Security Military Information agreement was signed between India and USA under which they both will share military intelligence for interoperability.

In 2004, Bilateral Security Cooperation agreement was signed under this Doctrinal Practices of rescue and relief will be documented.

In 2005, the USA and India signed the new framework for the USA India Defence Partnership. In 2010 both formally convene the 1st USA India Strategic Dialogue. In 2011, they signed a memorandum of understanding in New Delhi to promote closer cyber security cooperation.

In 2013 Defence Technology and Trade Initiative signed. In 2014 strategic and commercial dialogue started. In 2015 India USA Defence agreement was signed in 2016 – The USA elevated India to a major defence partner – a status which no other country holds and both signed functional military relationship, (FMR) a foundational agreement for defence cooperation. under FMR there are three separate agreements: -

1. LEMOA – Signed in 2016.

Logistical Exchange memorandum of agreement.

2. COMCASA – Communication compatibility and security agreement, signed in 2018 during 2+2 dialogue in New Delhi.

3. BECA – Basic exchange and cooperation agreement signed in 2020.

This is how the relation have evolved.


Present Relations of India with USA

India USA bilateral relations have developed into a global strategic partnership based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues. Regular exchange of high-level political visits has provided sustained momentum to bilateral cooperation. While the wide ranging and over expanding dialogue architecture has established a long-term framework for India USA engagement. Today the India has USA relations are broad based and multi sectoral, covering trade and investment, defence and security, education, science and technology, cyber security, high technology, civil nuclear energy, space technology and applications, clean energy, environment, agriculture and health.

Areas of Cooperation Between India and USA

(1) Political Cooperation: -

High level visits at the leadership level (P.M., President level) have been instrumental in strengthening and developing the multifaceted ties between the two countries. Also both leaders consult at various international sym.

	Open Access Research Article
	Volume: 23 Issue: 05
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(2) Defence: -

Defence relationship has emerged as a major pillar of India – US strategic partnership with intensification in defence trade, Joint exercises, personal exchanges, cooperation in maritime security and counter piracy. Bilateral exercises of India with USA is highest of India than with any other country. At the defence level, USA has tried to position itself at a reliable defence supplier. It has signed multiple agreements with India where the focus is sharing of doctrines, co-production and technology transfers.

(3) Counter Terrorism and Internal Security: -

Cooperation in counter terrorism has been considerable progress with enhanced intelligence sharing, information exchange and operational cooperation. The bilateral joint working group on counter terrorism is important mechanism under this.

Both sides-initiated designation dialogue also. In 2021, both countries held consultation on counter terrorism cooperation under the USA India comprehensive global strategic partnership under which both sides decided to expand cooperation on law enforcement, information sharing, exchanging best practices and increasing strategic convergence.

(4) Cyber Security Cooperation: -

India and USA have signed cyber framework in 2016. There are two important dialogue mechanisms under this: -

- (i) India USA cyber security dialogue.
- (ii) India USA joint working group on ICT.

(5) Trade and Economic Relations: -

USA was India's largest export destination and the second largest trading partner in 2020-21. The top traded goods include pearls and precious stones, pharmaceuticals, machinery, electronics, clothing, vehicles etc. India and USA have set up a bilateral investment initiative on 2014 to facilitate FDI, portfolio investment, capital market development and financing of infrastructure.


(6) Energy and Climate Change: -

The USA has emerged as a key partner for India in the field of energy. In 2005 energy security dialogue began between India and USA. In 2018, strategic energy partnership was launched between the two countries is witnessing increasing diversification across both conventional and renewable energy sources. An India USA natural task force was also created in 2018. India & USA are advancing cooperation and dialogue on climate change through a high level climate change working group and a joint working group on hydrofluorocarbon .

(7) Science & Technology & Space: -

India USA Science & Technology Cooperation Agreement was signed in 2005, which was renewed for a period of 10 years in 2019. The India USA Science & Technology forum (IUSSTF) was established in 2000 to promote cooperation in science and technology. Both countries cooperate in earth observation, satellite navigation and space science and exploration.

(8) Indian Diaspora and Cultural Cooperation: -

	Open Access Research Article
	Volume: 23 Issue: 05
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The number of Indians and Indian Americans in USA is estimated to be around four million which accounts for 10% of USA population. It includes professionals, entrepreneurs and educationalists with considerable and increasing influence in USA. Cultural cooperation manifesto in form of India focused educational program at the universities and educational institutions.

Why is relationship with India Vital for the USA :-

Like USA India is one of the largest democratises in the world. So, both have common aspiration and ideas. India's alliance is vital for USA due to its growing dominance in international politics, for China's growing dominance in the region. Also, India is second largest arms importer after Saudi Arabia and USA is one of the largest arms suppliers in the world. So, India holds huge potential. India has strong stance on countering terrorism which fulfils USA's interests. In 2018, India was the 9th largest goods trading partner. Also, India is one of the fastest growing economics in the world, holds a huge consumer market for the USA. Also, India is very vital for USA is strategic interest especially in Indo-pacific.

Why is relationship with USA Important for India :-


Diplomatic relationship of India with USA is important for economic growth and its own national interest. USA is safe guarding. India's national interest with Afghanistan and Pakistan. India has aspiration of becoming permanent member of UNSC can be achieved by getting closer to USA. USA also helps India in countering China's dominance in Indian Ocean Region. USA provides us naval security at the high seas which is important for India's oil imports. USA also helps in domain of commerce, aerospace, intelligence and defence due to its technological edge.

Challenges Faced by India USA Relationship :-

USA complains that India does not look for a life cycle approach when purchasing defence technologies and insists on buying technologies at a cheaper price. The USA also does not favour negotiation with civilian bureaucracy in India at a time when negotiation is done by USA military. At the trade and commerce level, USA complains that India does not allow American Companies in Diaries Sector, Cloud Computing and Railways. The USA also complains that India has weak intellectual property regime (IPR) USA government also complains about India's complex custom clearance procedures, which cause delays, increased costs and add uncertainty. Other issues that challenge India and USA relationship includes India's ties with Iran and Russia. USA wants India to move away from Russian equipment and platforms, as it feels that it may expose its technology and information to Moscow. But India remains reluctant to become fully plugged to USA defence systems due to India's longstanding commitment to nonalignment. India's preference for USA to be a pole in the multipolar world is also not entirely in con cordence with an American view that does not see the benefits of multi polarity in the same way. Differences remain on the other issues under negotiation, like e-commerce custom duties and fisheries subsidies.

Future :-

Notwithstanding the substantial disagreements between India and USA are variety of issues, the relationship is too valuable for both the parties, being the world's leading democracies and market economics. India and USA see each other as vital strategy and natural allies. USA sees

	Open Access Research Article
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India's potential to be an important contributor to Asian security and prosperity. India's China's Challenge, regional and global aspirations and increasing role in multi-lateral for and a growing acceptance of reliance on US cooperation in these spheres ensure the two countries will continue to find convergence in the long term. The Government of India could consider devoting same diplomatic capital to negotiate possible solutions to avoid sanctions while maintaining its strategic relationship with the USA India expects greater openness from the US – to understand Indian needs in emerging areas such as digital and e-commerce.

There is also need for deeper appreciation of Indian values that emanate from India's own unique history and politics. It is the time when coalition should take a step ahead from people-to-people strategy to ground led strategies. Both the nations should come on a common platform to address rising socio-economic and grow political issues sharing a unified vision.

Conclusion: -

During the cold war, the relationship with USA was very aggressive because of ideological differences. However, the USA continued to engage with India during cold war to prevent India to gravitate towards USSR. Since the end of the cold war, the relationship has enhanced because of shared values and beliefs that include democracy, freedom and rule of law.

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