



India - US Relations

This editorial is based on [“2+2 Meet: Delhi and DC are Seeking New Opportunities”](#) which was published in Hindustan Times on 15/04/2022. It talks about the status of India’s bilateral ties with the US in recent times.

For Prelims: India-US 2+2 Dialogue, India-US Relations, Indo-Pacific Strategy, S-400 Triumf Missile Defence System, CAATSA Law, QUAD.

For Mains: Bilateral Groupings & Agreements, Indo-Pacific Region, India US Relations - Challenges and Areas of Cooperation

If one were to look at the long list of diplomats, officials, and ministers from across the globe rushing to New Delhi in recent times, **India’s role as an emerging global superpower is quite easy to infer.**

In the context of the US, **India is the centrepiece** of the [Joe Biden administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy](#) - Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers recently [held the ‘2+2’ meeting with their American counterparts.](#)

Although the two countries are not sharing consensus over the [Russia-Ukraine Conflict](#) - one of the most worrying issues in global geopolitics, it is in their mutual interest to **rise above differences and ensure continuous cooperation.**

How have been India’s Relations with the US Lately?

- India-US bilateral partnership today encompasses a whole host of issues including the **response to Covid-19, economic recovery** post-pandemic, the [climate crisis](#) and [sustainable development](#), critical and **emerging technologies**, [supply chain resilience](#), **education**, the [diaspora](#), and [defence and security](#).
- The breadth and depth of Indo-US ties remain unmatched and the drivers of this partnership have been **growing at an unprecedented rate.**
 - The relationship remains unique insofar as this is driven at both levels: at the **strategic elite as well as at the people-to-people level.**
- Although India and the US have quite **contradictory responses towards the Russia-Ukraine crisis**, in the recent meeting, the PM of India and the US President expressed that the world’s two major democracies are **willing to work around their divergences** to arrive at mutually acceptable outcomes.
 - India and the US have underscored their commitment to continue to build on the

momentum of recent years and **not lose sight of the larger strategic picture.**

What was the Outcome of the Recent 2+2 Dialogue?

- The dialogue saw the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on **space situational awareness** as the two nations seek to deepen cooperation in outer space and cyberspace to develop capabilities in both “war-fighting domains”.
 - They also agreed to launch an inaugural Defence **Artificial Intelligence** Dialogue, while expanding joint cyber training and exercises.
- The **defence partnership** between India and the US continues to grow rapidly with the US secretary of defence underlining that the two nations have “**identified new opportunities to extend the operational reach** of our militaries and to coordinate more closely together across the expanse of the **Indo-Pacific.**”
- The US also pointedly mentioned that China was constructing “dual-use infrastructure” along the border with India and that it would “**continue to stand alongside**” **India to defend its sovereign interest.**

What Could Drift the US Away?

- **Strong Indo-Russia Relations:** Russia is not a new factor in this relationship. India has **chosen to increase**, rather than reduce, import of its meagre [crude oil supplies from Russia](#), being offered at a discount.
 - The [India-Russia defence relationship](#) has also been an irritant in the Indo-US relationship.
 - The [CAATSA law](#) has been part of the discussion for a long time on **India’s purchase of the S-400 Triumf missile defence system** from Russia.
 - However, there is a clear recognition in the US that any move to **sanction India would take the relationship back by decades.**
 - Despite a warning by the U.S. about the “consequences to countries that actively attempt to circumvent or backfill the sanctions,” **India and Russia are exploring ways of conducting bilateral trade by bypassing the dollar-based financial system.**
- **India’s Possibilities of Cooperation with China:** In recent years, China had looked at Indian moves in the region through the prism of their U.S. policy, but India’s stance on Ukraine has triggered a rethink in Beijing.
 - The **Chinese Foreign Minister’s recent visit to India** was an exploratory step towards a larger strategic reset with the latter, driven by the **need to wean India away from the Quad.**
 - During his visit, **China offered to create a virtual G-2 in Asia** by protecting India’s traditional role and collaborating on developmental projects as ‘**China-India Plus**’ in South Asia.
 - While Indian and American policies are at variance in countries such as Myanmar, Iran and Afghanistan, **China is the one interest that aligns the two countries together.**
 - If this moment provides for a reset of India’s ties with China, it will alter **India’s relationship with the U.S.** and **raise questions about the effectiveness of Quad.**

What is the Way Forward?

- **India-US Military Cooperation:** The US Secretary of State for Political Affairs during her recent visit to India, acknowledged that “India’s dependence on Russia for defence supplies is crucial” and that this was “legacy of security support from the Soviet Union and Russia at a time **when the US was less generous with India.**”

- However, with the new realities of today shaping the trajectory of this bilateral engagement, **it is time for the US to help India in building its defence manufacturing base** through **technology transfer** as well as **co-production and co-development**.
- **Exploring Opportunities:** India is emerging as a leading player in an international system that is undergoing an unprecedented transformation. It shall **use its present situation to explore opportunities to further its vital interests**.
 - India and the US are **strategic partners today in the true sense of the term** - a partnership among mature major powers that is **not seeking a complete convergence but managing differences** by ensuring a continuous dialogue and channelling these differences into crafting new opportunities.
- **Cooperation in Security:** Russia's increased alignment with China as a result of the Ukraine crisis only complicates India's ability to rely on Russia as it balances China. Hence, **continuing cooperation in other security areas is in both countries' interests**.
 - **Space governance will become central to the US-India** bilateral relationship, driven by mutual concern about the increasing space capabilities of the Chinese Army.

Drishti Mains Question:

"Although India and the US have had their differences when it came to condemning Russia in its recent conflict with Ukraine, it would be wise to not lose sight of the larger strategic picture - the Indo-Pacific and countering China". Discuss.