



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** What is the strategic relevance of India's defence engagements with the United States compared to those with Russia, particularly in the context of promoting stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region? **(250 Words)**

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### Approach

- Introduce Strategic relevance of India's defence ties with the U.S. as compared to Russia.
- Explain Russia as a time tested partner and then evolving strategic value of U.S. engagements in terms of China, military agreements, and Quad.
- Conclusion suitably.

### Introduction

India's defence ties with the U.S. and Russia reflect two distinct strategic approaches- **traditional reliance vs. evolving partnerships**. In light of **rising geopolitical tensions and shifting power dynamics**, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, these defence ties hold significant implications for regional stability and India's role as a key security actor.

### Body

#### Russia as a Time-Tested Partner:

- **Defense Cooperation:** Russia has historically been India's primary arms supplier, accounting for **36% of its arms imports** (S-400 air defense systems and MiG-29 fighter jets).
- **Strategic Alignment:** Both nations share common interests in regional security and have collaborated in counter-terrorism efforts and military exercises.
  - Their cooperation extends to aligning strategies in multilateral forums such as the **BRICS** and **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**.
  - This alignment demonstrates their long-standing commitment to shared regional and global security.

#### Strategic Relevance of India-U.S. Defence Cooperation:

- **10-Year Defense Framework:** India and the U.S. are working on a comprehensive 10-year defense cooperation framework, aimed to enhance interoperability and strengthen defense ties between the two nations.
- **Shared Indo-Pacific Vision:** India and the U.S. share common concerns over **China's expansion** in the Indo-Pacific and have aligned their strategic interests to promote a "**Free, Open, Inclusive, and Rules-based Indo-Pacific**," aiming to ensure regional stability and security.
  - Both countries, as part of the **multilateral Quad**, further strengthen their collaboration to counter regional challenges.

- **Foundational Agreements: LEMOA (2016), COMCASA (2018), and BECA (2020)** are key agreements enhancing India-U.S. defense cooperation.
  - LEMOA improves **logistics support**, COMCASA boosts **communication interoperability**, and BECA strengthens geospatial intelligence sharing.
    - All aimed at improving operational efficiency and countering regional threats, particularly from China.
- **Military Exercises:** Military exercises such as the **MALABAR Naval Exercise** strengthen maritime security and counter China's growing influence in the region.
  - Similarly, Yudh Abhyas and Vajra Prahar focus on improving joint operational capabilities, and fostering strategic partnerships among participating nations.
- **Enhancing Defense through Tech Collaboration;** The India-U.S. Initiative on **Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET, 2023)** fosters defense innovation.
  - It promotes collaboration in key areas such as semiconductors, AI, driving technological advancements to enhance both nations' defense capabilities.

#### Strategic Relevance of Indo-US vs. Indo-Russia Defence Engagements:

Aspect	India-US Defence Engagement	India-Russia Defence Engagement
Strategic Focus	Countering China, maritime security, rules-based order.	Traditional partner, with <b>legacy systems</b> .
Partnership Nature	Interoperability, joint operations, and <b>QUAD alignment</b> .	Legacy hardware ( <b>45% of Indian military hardware</b> ), maintenance support.
Tech Transfer & Constraints	Cutting-edge tech & joint production.i.e: <b>iCET</b>	Limited transfer & supply chain risks due to <b>Western sanctions post-Ukraine crisis</b> .
Geopolitical Challenges	Strategic alignment with Indo-Pacific goals.	China's growing influence on Russia limits the Indo-Pacific role.
Strategic impact on Indo-Pacific	Future-oriented, focused on maritime domain awareness, rules-based order, countering Chinese assertiveness.	Limited Indo-Pacific presence despite historical ties.

## Conclusion

While **Russia remains a key defense partner**, India's **balancing act with the U.S. reflects a deliberate strategy of India First**. The **U.S.** plays a crucial role in securing the **Indo-Pacific** through **strategic alignment** and **interoperability**, especially in countering **China's rise**. This strategic balance ensures India's regional stability and supports a **rules-based order** in the Indo-Pacific.