



India-US Defence Pact to Deepen Cooperation

For Prelims: [Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement \(LEMOA\)](#), Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA), Memorandum of Agreement regarding Assignment of Liaison Officers, Defense Priorities and Allocations System (DPAS), Joint Declaration on Defence Cooperation, [Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement \(COMCASA\)](#), [MH-60R Seahawk helicopters](#), [Sig Sauer rifles](#), [M777 howitzers](#).

For Mains: India-US Relations, India-US Defence Relations, Challenges, Opportunities and Way Forward

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, India and the US have signed two key pacts- a non-binding **Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA)** and a **Memorandum of Agreement regarding Assignment of Liaison Officers**.

- Both countries also agreed to enhance priority co-production projects as part of the **2023 US-India Roadmap for Defence Industrial Cooperation**.

What are the Key Defence Agreements Signed Between India and the US?

- Security of Supplies Arrangement (SOSA):**
 - The **Security of Supplies Arrangement (SOSA)** is an agreement between the US and India.
 - India is the **18th SOSA partner of the US** after Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.
 - It allows both nations to **prioritise each other's goods and services for national defense**, ensuring **supply chain resilience** during emergencies.
 - Under SOSA, **US defense contractors can request expedited deliveries** from India and vice versa.
 - Although **not legally binding**, SOSA **operates on mutual goodwill**, with Indian companies **prioritising US orders** and the US offering assurances through its **Defense Priorities and Allocations System (DPAS)**, managed by the Department of Defence (DoD) and the Department of Commerce (DOC).
- MoU on Liaison Officers:**
 - The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aims to **enhance information-sharing** between India and the US by **establishing a system of Liaison Officers**.
 - It will start with India's deployment of an officer to the **US Special Operations Command** in Florida.
 - This initiative builds on previous agreements, including the **September 2013 Joint Declaration on Defence Cooperation** and the **2015 Framework for US-India Defence Relations**, reflecting a commitment to strengthen bilateral defense ties.

- **Reciprocal Defence Procurement (RDP) Agreement:**
 - India and the US are discussing a Reciprocal Defence Procurement (RDP) Agreement which is **yet to be finalised**.
 - These are designed to enhance the **rationalisation, standardisation, interchangeability, and interoperability** of defense equipment between the US and its allies.
 - The US has signed RDP Agreements with **28 countries so far**.
 - This agreement would **enable US companies to bypass certain procurement restrictions**, such as India's **"Make in India"** initiative, facilitating the **establishment of manufacturing bases in India** and **closer collaboration with local firms**.
- **SOSA Vs. RDP:**
 - SOSA and RDP both aim to **enhance defense relations** between two nations, but they have **distinct objectives**.
 - **SOSA focuses on maintaining the defense supply chain during crises**, while **RDP establishes a legally binding framework** that requires **prioritisation of defense orders**, facilitating greater joint production and technological collaboration.

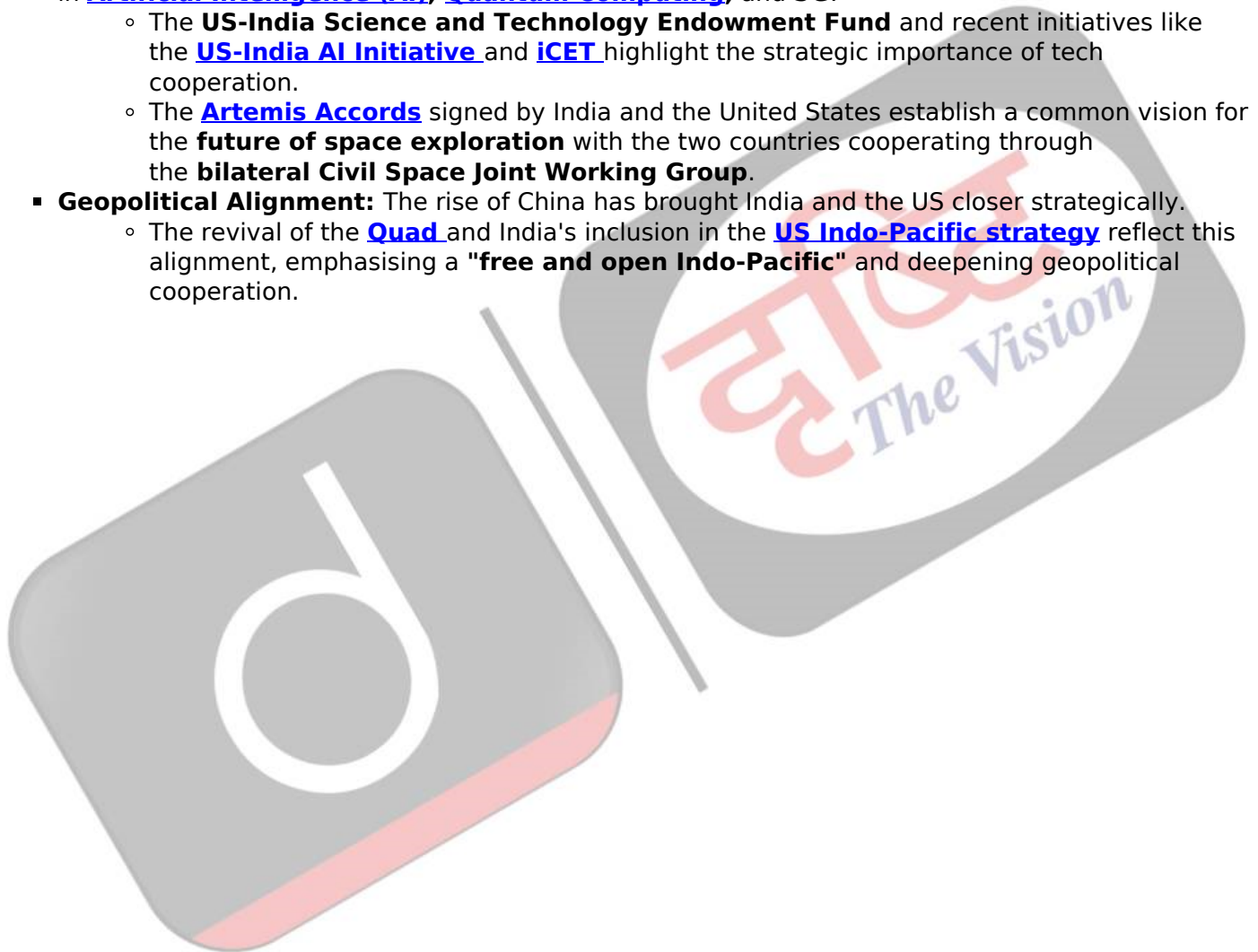
What are the Developments in India-US Defence Cooperation?

- **GSOMIA:** The foundation of India-US defense cooperation was laid with the **2002 General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)**, facilitating the **sharing of sensitive military information**.
- **LEMOA:** This was followed by the **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)** in **2016**, which established the framework for **reciprocal logistical support between the two militaries**.
- **COMCASA and BECA:** The **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)** in **2018** enhanced secure **military communications and access to advanced defense technologies**, while the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)** in **2020** enabled the **sharing of geospatial data critical for military operations**.
- **2+2 Dialogue:** These foundational agreements supported by joint exercises and the **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue** collectively facilitated interoperability and trust, setting the stage for deeper collaboration.
- **Strategic Trade Authorization Tier-1 Status:** India-US defense ties have grown significantly since the early 2000s. India was designated a **Major Defense Partner in 2016** and granted **Strategic Trade Authorization tier 1 status** in 2018, allowing access to advanced technologies.
- **DTTI:** The **Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI)**, established in 2012, aimed to **streamline defense trade and promote co-production** and co-development of defense technologies, reflecting a shift from a buyer-seller relationship to a partnership model.
- **Military Procurement:** India's military procured from the US **MH-60R Seahawk helicopters, Sig Sauer rifles, and M777 howitzers**.
 - **Ongoing negotiations** to manufacture **GE F-414 jet engines in India** and procure **MQ-9B High-Altitude Long-Endurance (HALE) UAVs** signify a growing emphasis on **indigenous production and technology transfer**, in line with India's **'Make in India'** initiative.
- **INDUS-X:** The launch of the **India-US Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X)** in June 2023, fostered **defense innovation and industrial cooperation**.
 - In 2023, the defense cooperation roadmap highlighted priority areas such as **Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR)**, **Undersea Domain Awareness**, and **Air Combat Systems**.
- **I2U2 Grouping:** **I2U2** comprises **India, Israel, the US, and the United Arab Emirates**, dedicated to **joint investments and new initiatives** in various sectors, including **water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security**.

How India and US Relations Have Evolved Over the Time?

- **Cold War Period:**
 - During the Cold War, **India and the US were on opposite sides**, with India pursuing **non-alignment** and Pakistan aligning with the US.

- Relations improved in the 1990s after **India's economic liberalisation** and the end of the **Cold War**.
- President Clinton's visit to India in 2000 marked a turning point, leading to strategic dialogues and increased economic cooperation, further strengthened by the **Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP)** in 2004.
- **Nuclear Agreement:**
 - The **2008 Civil Nuclear Agreement** ended India's nuclear isolation and recognized it as a **responsible nuclear power**, enhancing cooperation in defense and high-tech sectors and solidifying the **US commitment to elevating India's global status**.
- **Economic Synergy:** Bilateral trade reached **USD 118.28 billion** in 2023-24, making the US **India's largest trading partner**.
 - Cooperation has expanded to **clean energy, the digital economy, and healthcare**, with initiatives like the **US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership** and collaboration on **Covid-19** vaccines.
- **Technology Cooperation:** It has become a cornerstone of bilateral ties, with collaboration in **Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Computing, and 5G**.
 - The **US-India Science and Technology Endowment Fund** and recent initiatives like the **US-India AI Initiative** and **iCET** highlight the strategic importance of tech cooperation.
 - The **Artemis Accords** signed by India and the United States establish a common vision for the **future of space exploration** with the two countries cooperating through the **bilateral Civil Space Joint Working Group**.
- **Geopolitical Alignment:** The rise of China has brought India and the US closer strategically.
 - The revival of the **Quad** and India's inclusion in the **US Indo-Pacific strategy** reflect this alignment, emphasising a **"free and open Indo-Pacific"** and deepening geopolitical cooperation.



INDIA-US PARTNERSHIP

Economic Relations

- US became India's biggest trading partner in 2022-23 followed by China and UAE
- The bilateral trade has increased by 7.65% in 2022-23 (compared to 2021-22)

Defence Cooperation

- India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X), 2023: Start-ups and tech companies to collaborate on the co-development and co-production of advanced technologies
- Fighter Jet Deal, 2023: GE's F414 engine technology and manufacturing will be transferred for India's Tejas Mk2 jet, enhancing its indigenous capabilities
- Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), 2012: To facilitate collaboration in defence manufacturing, research and development, and technology transfer
- New Framework for India-US Defence Relations, 2005: Updated for 10 years in 2015

India intends to procure armed MQ-9B SeaGuardian UAVs

Science & Technology

- Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), 2022: Cooperation on CETs in areas including AI, quantum computing, semiconductors and wireless telecommunications
- Critical Minerals Partnership: Recently, India joined the US-led Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) to boost global critical energy and minerals supply chains
- Collaboration in Space: NASA to train ISRO astronauts, aiming for a joint International Space Station (ISS) mission in 2024
 - Artemis Accord: A US-led alliance seeking to facilitate international collaboration in planetary exploration and research; signed by India
 - NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR): For understanding changes in Earth's ecosystems and other environmental changes

Civil Nuclear Deal

- Civil Nuclear Cooperation: Bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement signed in October 2008

Energy & Climate Change

- Joint Clean Energy Research and Development Centre (JCERDC), 2010: To promote clean energy innovations by teams of scientists from India and the United States
- Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership: Launched at the Leaders climate summit 2021
- Global Biofuel Alliance (India, Brazil and US), 2023: Aimed at facilitating cooperation and intensifying the use of sustainable biofuels, including in the transportation sector

Security

- Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Initiative, 2010: To expand collaboration on counter-terrorism, information sharing and capacity building

Four Foundational Agreements:

General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), 2002: Allows militaries to share intelligence gathered by them

- ◆ Industrial Security Annex, 2019 is a part of GSOMIA

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), 2016: Both countries gain access to designated military facilities for refuelling and replenishment.

Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), 2018: A legal framework for the transfer of highly sensitive communication security equipment from the US to India

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence (BECA), 2020: Allow both countries to share geospatial and satellite data with each other

In 2015, both countries issued Delhi Declaration of Friendship and adopted a Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region

Popular Visa Among Indians include H-1B, L. Indian citizens set to become largest foreign student community in the US (20% growth in 2022)



What are the Challenges to India-US Relations?

- **Human Rights and Democratic Values:** Relations between the **US and India** have been affected by concerns over the treatment of minorities, especially Muslims. The [Citizenship Amendment Act \(CAA\)](#) and the revocation of [Jammu and Kashmir's special status](#) have prompted discussions about **India's commitment to secularism and tolerance**.
- **Strategic Competition with China:** While both nations see **China as a strategic challenge**, their approaches sometimes **diverge**. **India's economic ties with China** occasionally conflict with US interests, creating friction.
- **Trade and Economic Disputes:** **Trade disputes, protectionist measures, and concerns over market access** and [intellectual property rights](#) complicate efforts to reach a comprehensive trade deal.
- **Geopolitical Alignment:** The legacy of India's non-alignment during the Cold War, which saw it lean towards the **Soviet Union**, still influences perceptions and expectations in the bilateral

relationship.

- India seeks to balance its relations with both the US and Russia. This balancing act can create tensions, especially when the US expects stronger condemnation of Russia from India over [Russia-Ukraine War](#).

Way Forward

- **Address Diplomatic Concerns:** India and the US should resolve tensions by addressing issues related to democracy and strategic cooperation, with a focus on initiatives like the **ICET**.
- **India's Role as a Global Bridge:** India can leverage its leadership in forums like the [G20](#) and [SCO](#) to bridge gaps between the West and developing nations.
- **Enhance Counterterrorism Cooperation:** Strengthen efforts on counterterrorism, particularly in managing a **Taliban-led Afghanistan** and pressuring Pakistan to curb support for terrorist groups.
- **Focus on Emerging Technologies and AI:** Increase collaboration on emerging technologies and AI, emphasising **data regulation, information sharing**, and privacy for national security.
- **Advance Multilateral Coordination:** Prioritise coordination in forums like the Quad and [I2U2](#) to address international strategic issues.
- **Boost Economic Engagement:** Enhance trade, investment, and technological cooperation, with initiatives like [ICET](#) driving economic growth and market access.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the evolution of India-US relations. How do India-US defence relations affect India's ties with other major powers?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. From which one of the following did India buy the Barak anti-missile defence systems? (2008)

- (a) Israel
- (b) France
- (c) Russia
- (d) USA

Ans: (a)

Q. Recently, the USA decided to support India's membership in multi-lateral export control regimes called the "Australia Group" and the "Wassenaar Arrangement". What is the difference between them? (2011)

1. The Australia Group is an informal arrangement which aims to allow exporting countries to minimize the risk of assisting chemical and biological weapons proliferation, whereas the Wassenaar Arrangement is a formal group under the OECD holding identical objectives.
2. The Australia Group comprises predominantly of Asian, African and North American countries whereas the member countries of Wassenaar Arrangement are predominantly from the European Union and American Continents.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

Mains:

Q. What is the significance of Indo-US defence deals over Indo-Russian defence deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region. **(2020)**

Q. 'What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India's National self-esteem and ambitions'. Explain with suitable examples. **(2019)**

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