



India-US '2+2' Talks

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US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis held talks with their Indian counterparts External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi.

What is the '2+2' talk?

- It is a format of dialogue where the defense and foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country.
- India holds such talks with Japan and Australia, at the foreign secretary and defense secretary level.
- India holds ministerial-level talks only with the US. Apart from India, the United States holds such ministerial dialogues with Australia and Japan also.
- The talks were announced when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met US President Donald Trump in June 2017. The "2+2" dialogue has replaced the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue between the foreign and commerce ministers of the two countries that were held during the previous Obama administration.

Outcome of the Summit

- COMCASA agreement
 - India and the US have signed Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA).
COMCASA is meant to provide a legal framework for the transfer of communication security equipment from the US to India that would facilitate “interoperability” between their forces — and potentially with other militaries that use US-origin systems for secured data links.
 - Highlights of COMCASA agreement:
 - COMCASA is an India specific agreement.
 - The agreement is for 10 years and it comes into effect immediately.
 - India will have full access to relevant US equipment.
 - There will be no disruption in supply.
 - Indian Navy will have access to real-time classified information from US Navy.
 - Benefits of COMCASA
 - With COMCASA, Indian armed forces will get to fully exploit the capability of the military platforms procured from the US.
 - As a consequence of Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA), India will get access to the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System or (CENTRIXS) which is the secure communication system network in the US.
 - Navy ships with CENTRIXS systems on board can communicate securely with the U.S. Navy when needed and can benefit from the wider situational picture of the region as the US have a large number of ships and aircrafts deployed.
 - It also means that the armed forces of the two countries will be able to talk to each other during exercises and operations.
 - Concerns regarding COMCASA agreement
 - There are persistent concerns that this would allow U.S. Navy access to India’s own secure communication network and also that the information shared with the U.S. will be accessible by Pakistan.
 - India has tried to quell the fears and stated that data acquired through such systems cannot be disclosed or transferred to any person or entity without India’s consent.
- First Tri-Services Exercise

Both India and the US agreed to conduct a new tri-services exercise and both sides also agreed to further increase personnel exchanges between the two militaries and defense organizations.

- Naval Engagement
 - Both India and US agreed to start naval engagements in the West Asian region and committed to start exchanges between the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and the Indian Navy in the Western Indian Ocean.
- Terrorism
 - India and the US discussed bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation agreed to enhance their ongoing cooperation in multilateral forums such as the UN and Financial Action Task Force.
 - The US also gave its support to the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.
 - Focus on Pakistan: Both countries called on Pakistan to ensure that the territory under its control is not used to launch terrorist attacks on other countries and they called on Pakistan to bring to justice the perpetrators of the Mumbai, Pathankot, Uri attacks.
- NSG Support
 - The US reiterated its full support for India's membership into the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- India-Russia S-400 deal
 - The US gave no firm commitment that India will get waivers if it went ahead with the Indo-Russian deal of S-400 missile defense system.
 - India has previously declared that it will go ahead with the \$5 Billion S-400 Triumph Missile Defense System deal with Russia despite US's concerns.
 - US has imposed military sanctions against Russia under the **CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act)** law for its annexation of Crimea as well as alleged meddling in the American presidential election in 2016.
 - CAATSA mandates the US government to punish entities and countries engaging in the significant transaction with the defense or intelligence establishment of Russia. Thus, India is on the radar of US sanctions if it goes ahead with this deal.

- US sanctions on Iran
 - The U.S. has demanded India to “zero out” oil imports from Iran by November. Also, there was no mention of what the U.S. will do on India’s investment in the Chabahar port once its full sanctions kick in on November 4.
 - India is meeting 83% of its crude oil requirements from outside. Of this, close to 25% comes from Iran.
 - The US can impose sanctions on India over its oil imports with Iran and its involvement with Iran’s Chabahar port.
 - Following US diktat could hurt India dearly not only because of costs at a time when the dollar is strengthening and fuel prices are going up but also in terms of its substantial engagement with Iran.
 - India is also unlikely to follow the US stands on Iran as it has clearly mentioned that it abided by sanctions imposed by the United Nations only but not those imposed by any other country.
- US-India Trade relations
 - The US has called for reducing India’s \$23 billion trade surplus.
 - The U.S. said that they expect India to increase imports of American oil and gas as well as aircraft in order to wipe out the trade surplus India enjoys.
 - India did not receive a clear-cut assurance of its **GSP (Generalised System of Preferences)** status being restored, or of waivers on steel and aluminum tariffs imposed by the US.
- China and Indo-Pacific
 - The joint statement mentioned advancing “**a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region**” and promoting **sustainable “debt-financing” in the region.**
 - These two points are clearly aimed at Beijing’s role in the South China Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative projects, respectively.
- India and US in Afghanistan
 - The US has named India as a “**critical part**” of its South-Asia strategy.
 - India and the US expressed support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process.
 - The United States welcomed India’s enhanced role in Afghanistan’s economic development and stabilization.

“Four Foundational Agreements” between the US and its Partners

- **General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)**
 - GSOMIA allows militaries to share the intelligence gathered by them.
 - Signed by India in 2002.
- **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)**
 - LEMOA allows both countries to have access to each other’s designated military facilities for refueling and replenishment.
 - Signed by India in 2016.

- **Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA)**
 - COMCASA(Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) is the India specific version of CISMOA.
 - Signed by India in 2018.
- **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)**
 - BECA will allow India and US militaries to share geospatial and satellite data with each other.
 - India has not signed BECA yet.

Generalised System of Preference

- GSP is the largest and oldest U.S. trade preference program. Established by the Trade Act of 1974, GSP promotes economic development by eliminating duties on thousands of products when imported from one of 120 designated beneficiary countries and territories.
- The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provides opportunities for many of the world's poorest countries to use trade to grow their economies and climb out of poverty.