India and USA Military Cooperation

Preface: India-U.S. 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. The emphasis placed by the Government in India on development and good governance has created opportunity to reinvigorate bilateral ties and enhance cooperation under the motto --- “ChaleinSaathSaath: Forward Together We Go”, and “SanjhaPrayas, Sab ka Vikas” (Shared Effort, Progress for All) adopted during the first two summits of Prime Minister Modi and President Obama in September 2014 and January 2015 respectively. The summit level joint statement issued in June 2016 called the India-U.S. relationship an “Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century”. Regular exchange of high-level political visits has provided sustained momentum to bilateral cooperation, while the wide-ranging and ever-expanding dialogue architecture has established a long-term framework for India-U.S. engagement. Today, the India-U.S. bilateral cooperation is 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. Vibrant people-to-people interaction and support across the political spectrum in both countries nurture our bilateral relationship.

India-U.S. Dialogue Architecture: There are more than 50 bilateral dialogue mechanisms between the two governments. The first two meetings of the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue at the level of EAM and MoS (Commerce & Industry) were held in Washington DC in September 2015 and New Delhi in August 2016. This apex-level dialogue has added a commercial component to the five traditional pillars of bilateral relations on which the erstwhile Strategic Dialogue of Foreign Ministers had focussed, namely: Strategic Cooperation; Energy and Climate Change, Education and Development; Economy, Trade and Agriculture; Science and Technology; and Health and Innovation. The second meeting of the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue took place on 30 August 2016 in New Delhi. In addition, there are Ministerial-level dialogues involving home (Homeland Security Dialogue), finance (Financial and Economic Partnership), commerce (Trade Policy Forum), HRD (Higher Education Dialogue), Science & Technology (Joint Commission Meeting on S&T) and energy (Energy Dialogue).

Defence Cooperation: Defence relationship has emerged as a major pillar of India-U.S. strategic partnership with the signing of ‘New Framework for India-U.S. Defense Relations’ in 2005 and the resulting intensification in defence trade, joint exercises, personnel exchanges, collaboration and cooperation in maritime security and counter-piracy, and exchanges between each of the three services. The Defence Framework Agreement was updated and renewed for another 10 years in June 2015. The two countries now conduct more bilateral exercises with each other than they do with any other country. India participated in Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise in July-August 2016 for the second time with an Indian Naval Frigate. Bilateral dialogue mechanisms in the field of defence include Defence Policy Group (DPG), Defence Joint Working Group (DJW), Defence Procurement and Production Group (DPPG), Senior Technology Security Group (STSG), Joint Technical Group (JTG), Military Cooperation...
Group (MCG), and Service-to-Service Executive Steering Groups (ESGs). The agreements signed during the past one year include, Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Association (LEMOA) signed in August 2016, Fuel Exchange Agreement signed in November 2015, Technical Agreement (TA) on information sharing on White (merchant) Shipping signed in May 2016 and the Information Exchange Annexe (IEA) on Aircraft Carrier Technologies signed in June 2016. Aggregate worth of defence acquisition from U.S. Defence has crossed over US$ 13 billion. India and the United States have launched a Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) aimed at simplifying technology transfer policies and exploring possibilities of co-development and co-production to invest the defence relationship with strategic value. The DTTI Working Group and its Task Force will expeditiously evaluate and decide on unique projects and technologies which would have a transformative impact on bilateral defence relations and enhance India’s defence industry and military capabilities. During President Obama’s visit in January 2015, the two sides agreed to start cooperation on 4 DTTI pathfinder projects and 2 pathfinder initiatives, which are currently at various stages of execution. During RM’s visit in December 2015, the two sides also identified opportunities for bilateral cooperation in production and design of jet engine components. During Secretary Carter’s visit in April 2014, two more G-2-G DTTI projects were added to the list. The DTTI meeting in Delhi in July 2016 decided to broaden its agenda by setting up five new Joint Working Groups on: Naval Systems; Air Systems, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance; Chemical and Biological Protection; and Other Systems. During the visit of Prime Minister to the U.S. in June 2016, the U.S. recognised India as a “Major Defence Partner”, which commits the U.S. to facilitate technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners, and industry collaboration for defence co-production and co-development.

Relationship Dynamics

- It can be elaborated into three main categories-
  - **Good Phase**- It is linked to the historic terms like the U.S. civil nuclear deal, the ongoing defence cooperation and the signing of “Foundational Defence Agreements” which are the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (Beca) etc.
  - **Bad Phase**- It is linked with the current trade challenges, the U.S.’s hyphenation of India with China in its trade war and its call for the removal of the ‘developing country’ tag assigned by the WTO.
  - **Ugly Phase**- It was when the U.S. sent its fleet towards India to assist Pakistan during the 1971 war.

- The good outweighs the other two but a sense of scepticism remains because of India’s multilateral outreach, especially with respect to the procurement of defence material from Russia and Indian military’s presence in Afghanistan.
- India also needs to remain mindful of the unpredictability and inherent contradictions in U.S. foreign policy and, at the same time, capitalise on U.S. ‘isolationism and retrenchment’ by maintaining its time-tested policy of non-alignment and strategic autonomy.

Recent news
The India-U.S. Military Cooperation Group (MCG) dialogue is a forum to review the progress of defence cooperation between India’s Integrated Defence Staff and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) at the strategic and operational levels.

- The Integrated Defence Staff was responsible for coordination among the armed forces before the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff.
- As part of the agreement reached at the 2+2 Dialogue of December 2019, with the intent to further military liaison relationships, India has already posted a liaison officer at the U.S. Navy Central Command in Bahrain and a U.S. liaison officer has joined the Indian Navy’s Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region at Gurugram.

Details:

- The India-U.S. Military Cooperation Group (MCG) dialogue scheduled to be held in the U.S., has been cancelled given the COVID-19 outbreak.
- As part of improving defence cooperation and interoperability between India and the U.S., India is considering a U.S. request for posting liaison officers at the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). This was to be discussed at the dialogue.
- The MCG dialogue was to follow up on the U.S. President’s India visit and fast-track the decisions, including that on 24 MH-60R multi-role helicopters.

2+2 dialogue

India and the US have recently concluded second 2+2 ministerial dialogue in Washington. Several landmark agreements in both defence and Civilian sectors were signed.

Key Points

- **Industrial Security Annex (ISA)**
  - ISA to the will provide a framework for exchange and protection General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) of classified military information between the U.S. and Indian defence industries.
  - Currently, under GSOMIA, such information is exchanged between the Government authorities of the two countries but not between private parties.
  - This will further promote “Make in India” in the defence sector.
  - In accordance with the budget announcement (2018-19), the government has already decided to set up two Defence Industrial Corridors in the country, one in Uttar Pradesh and another in Tamil Nadu.

Peacekeeping for Indo-Pacific

- Cooperation in capacity-building of UN peacekeepers from Indo-Pacific countries, based on demands from the countries concerned.
- Counter-terrorism efforts were also discussed including dangers of of cross border terrorism.
Tiger Triumph Exercise

- To hold the India-U.S. joint tri-services ‘Tiger Triumph’ on an annual basis.
- The first edition was held in November 2019 as a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise.

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

- The CDRI was launched at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, USA in September 2019. It is headquartered in New Delhi, India.
- The US is now part of it.

Water Resource Management

- Memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Ministry of Jal Shakti and the U.S. Geological Survey to promote technical cooperation in water resources management and water technology.

Space Situational Awareness (SSA)

- Cooperation for exchange of information including space debris and space traffic management.
- It ensures navigational safety of our space assets.

Young Innovators Internship Programme (YIIP)

- Create internship opportunities in key areas of science and economy.
- New opportunities for young entrepreneurs.

Parliamentary Exchange and Judicial cooperation

- Reciprocal visits by Parliamentarians from both countries.
- The U.S. Federal Judicial Center and India’s National Judicial Academy in Bhopal to cooperate in the area of counter-terrorism jurisprudence to new areas of criminal jurisprudence including money laundering, drug trafficking etc.

‘2+2’ Dialogue

- It is a format of dialogue where the defense and foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country. 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism between the two countries.
- India holds such talks with Australia, at the foreign secretary and defense secretary level but the ministerial level.
- With the US this was the second 2+2 meeting (Washington), first was held in New Delhi in September 2018.
- US holds such ministerial dialogues with Australia and Japan also.