

Promoting Strategic Partnerships in Obama's Asia-Pacific National Security Strategy: The Case of the US-India Defence Cooperation

Promouvoir des partenariats stratégiques dans la stratégie de sécurité nationale Asie-Pacifique d'Obama: le cas de la coopération de défense américano-indienne

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Abstract

This paper aims to clarify the significance of strategic partnerships in the Obama administration's national security policy with emerging powers in the Asia-Pacific region, with a particular focus on India. Through an analysis of the 2010 and 2015 national security strategy documents, the study highlights the importance of collaboration with India. The research also explores how China's rise contributed to the advancement of US-Indian cooperation, specifically in defence. Recognizing the interdependence of national and global interests, the Obama administration prioritized international cooperation on shared concerns, as evidenced by its rebalancing strategy for the Asia-Pacific region. Given their common concerns, the strategic partnership between the US and India, particularly in defence, assumed critical importance. The paper concludes that US-Indian defence cooperation is essential for safeguarding their shared interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Keywords: Obama Administration; National Security Strategy (NSS) documents; Strategic Partnership; U.S.-India Defence Cooperation; China's Rise.

Résumé

Cet article vise à clarifier l'importance des partenariats stratégiques dans la politique de sécurité nationale de l'administration Obama avec les puissances émergentes de la région Asie-Pacifique, en mettant particulièrement l'accent sur l'Inde. Grâce à une analyse des documents de stratégie de sécurité nationale de 2010 et 2015, l'étude souligne l'importance de la collaboration

avec l'Inde. La recherche explore également comment l'essor de la Chine a contribué à l'avancement de la coopération indo-américaine, notamment dans le domaine de la défense. Reconnaissant l'interdépendance des intérêts nationaux et mondiaux, l'administration Obama a accordé la priorité à la coopération internationale sur les préoccupations communes, comme en témoigne sa stratégie de rééquilibrage pour la région Asie-Pacifique. Compte tenu de leurs préoccupations communes, le partenariat stratégique entre les États-Unis et l'Inde, en particulier dans le domaine de la défense, a pris une importance cruciale. L'article conclut que la coopération de défense entre les États-Unis et l'Inde est essentielle pour la sauvegarde de leurs intérêts communs dans la région Asie-Pacifique.

Mots clés : administration Obama ; documents de stratégie de sécurité nationale (NSS) ; partenariat stratégique; coopération de défense américano-indienne; essor de la Chine.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The United States is part of an international environment that is dynamic and in which various nations assume greater prominence. In order to accomplish its national interests, the United States has placed a significant emphasis on expanding present international cooperation areas, particularly on matters of common interests.

The continuous shifts in global power dynamics from the West to the East have increased the importance of the Asia-Pacific for the US to an unprecedented level. The region obviously becomes the World's Economic Powerhouse in short time. Besides this, Chinese influence is expanding as a result of its fast economic development and military modernisation. Against this background, Washington needs a more active strategy that recognises the new geo-political changes and challenges.

Accordingly, President Barack Obama launched the rebalancing strategy, which sought to maintain stability, advance American interests, and win over the support of regional nations. To accomplish the aforementioned goals, President Obama underscored the significance of bilateral partnerships with like-minded Asian-Pacific countries. In this sense, Obama's National Security Strategies of 2010 and 2015 made clear the importance his administration placed on bilateral ties, particularly with developing Asian powerhouses. One example is the relationship between the United States and India.

The US-India relationship was evolved on the basis of shared interests, including the promotion of global security, stability, and prosperity. As their strategic alignment deepened, the two nations expanded their defence operations and dialogues to handle regional challenges, particularly China's rise. The US-India collaboration, notably in the defence sector, was evident during the Obama administration as it formed a prominent part of the administration's rebalancing strategy to manage the shifting dynamics and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region.

In this regard, the main objective of this article is to clarify the importance of US-India partnership as an integral component of Obama's rebalancing strategy by reviewing the 2010 and 2015 National Security Strategy documents. The bilateral defence cooperation between Washington and New Delhi was clearly evident during the Obama presidency, mainly due to the increased operations and collaboration in this sector. In essence, the work sheds light on defensive collaboration between the two nations in order to preserve the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in light of China's expanding aspirations.

Although there are many works that delve into strategic partnerships within Obama's Asia-Pacific National Security Strategy, such as Cara Abercrombie's "Realising the Potential: Mature Defence Cooperation and the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership," Colley and Ganguly's "The Obama Administration and India," as well as Hanif and Khan's "U.S. Security Strategy for Asia Pacific and India's Role," there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific case of US-India defence cooperation. This subject has yet to be thoroughly explored. In this perspective, the present paper strives to answer the following questions: How was India depicted in Obama's NSS documents? To what extent did the US-India defence ties grow during the Obama Presidency? What impact did their cooperation have on Asia's Power Balance, particularly in light of China's rise?

To effectively analyse the topic at hand, the article is conducted through a combination of the conceptual, descriptive, and qualitative methods. The conceptual method is adopted to describe key concepts such as "partnership" and "national security strategy," and establish a theoretical framework for the present research. The descriptive method is employed to provide a comprehensive picture of US-India defence collaboration, taking into account the historical

evolution, important turning points, and major areas of cooperation. The qualitative method, however, is used to explore Obama's national security policy documents of 2010 and 2015 in order to comprehend the relevance of collaboration inside his administration's framework.

2. Strategic Partnership

Since the collapse of the rigidly bipolar Cold War system, a greater emphasis had been placed on less formal alliances between governments in addition to more traditional ones. The strategic partnership was one of numerous alignments that proliferated in the Asia-Pacific region. It is a loosely organised and multifaceted framework of collaboration between two parties. Although major Asian powers like China and Japan as well as emerging powers like India and Indonesia initially used strategic partnerships, the United States, the main nation to have forged alliances since the end of World War II, has recently started to do so more frequently, especially in the Asia-Pacific region (Parameswaran, 2014, p. 263). Accordingly, this study examines the emergence of strategic partnerships, a novel kind of alignment in the Asia Pacific, during the Obama administration.

In a span of five years, the Obama administration formalised strategic partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region with New Zealand, Singapore, and India. It frequently asserted that burden-sharing was a key component of developing strategic relationships with other nations. In this context, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that the administration would work to create a "multi-partner world" and that it would "specially emphasize" the need for developing nations like India and Indonesia to be full partners in tackling the global agenda in a speech given to the Council on Foreign Relations in July 2009 (Parameswaran, 2014, pp. 266-67). It seems that the Obama administration used strategic partnerships in Asia Pacific region as a key strategy to both engage crucial target nations to help address regional and global concerns as well as to organize Washington's relationships with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

3. U.S. National Security Strategy

Every country in the world has a National Security Strategy (NSS), which refers to the government's comprehensive plan for guaranteeing the security of the nation. It gives

instructions on how to carry out the country's national security. Several actors, involved in national security, view the NSS as being essential for the fusion and coordination of activities. When a response to threats or a crisis is required, the NSS lays out the conditions and sets the chain of command for decision-making. It also specifies how security forces must be used (Boucher, 2009, p. 1). National Security Strategy is either explicitly stated in a publically available document or subtly delivered through speeches by government officials. The fundamental goal of a National Security Strategy is to offer guidance on how to address the risks posed by upcoming challenges, ensuring the country's long-term security in the face of both broad ambiguity and clearly identifiable dangers (Dumont, 2019, p. 1).

The United States' National Security Strategy is an official document that is released every four years. It lays forth the values and objectives that will govern how America uses its influence and power abroad. In other words, a picture of the perceived position of American power and influence in the globe at a certain time period is presented in this document. The most significant dangers to American national security are also briefly described, along with the methods or measures that must be taken to counter them. Such a document is crucial since real security plans are frequently based on the US perceptions of both its strengths and weaknesses (Jamshidi & Noori, 2017, p.176). Like his predecessors, President Obama released his two national security strategies in 2010 and 2015, respectively. This paper particularly examines Obama's delineation of the US-Indo relationship in these two national security strategy documents.

4. Strategic Partnership with India in Obama National Security Strategy Documents of 2010 and 2015

The US has a multifaceted approach to forming partnerships. Based on building relationships, the US divides the globe into three segments. The traditional allies are in the first section. The twenty-first century centres of influence make up the second group. Three nations fall under this category: Russia, China, and India. The US is aware of the reality of the world and observes these countries making their presence felt on the international scene. It regards developing bilateral ties with these nations as a crucial step in engaging them. These ties are designed to create common interests that support security and stability (National Security Strategy, 2010, pp. 45,

64). In this context, the growth of the US-India strategic partnership was stressed in the 2010 NSS: "The United States and India are building a strategic partnership...Working together through our Strategic Dialogue and high-level visits, we seek a broad-based relationship..." (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 43).

President Obama's second national security strategy document was launched in 2015. It is nearly half as long as that of 2010, and was less idealistic than it. It conceded, at least implicitly, how hard it could be to translate internationalist visions into reality. The document provided guidance on how the US should promote international law in a variety of regions, including the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific. The justification for the claim that the United States "welcomes the rise of stable, peaceful, and rich China" and will keep collaborating with that country on several fronts was straightforward. Additionally, the on-going American "rebalancing" would reassure partners in Asia and offer defence against any Chinese strike (Patrick, 2015).

More importantly, the 2015 NSS specifically pledged to strengthen defence and security cooperation with India, a significant defence partner of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. On this particular issue, President Obama emphatically stated: "As the world's largest democracies, we share inherent values and mutual interests that form the cornerstone of our cooperation, particularly in the areas of security ...We support India's role as a regional provider of security and its expanded participation in critical regional institutions..." (National Security Strategy, 2015, pp. 24-25). Before delving into the US-India partnership, it is critical to first get a comprehensive grasp of the two nations' relationship, particularly in the realm of defence prior to the Obama administration.

5. US-India Defence Ties: An Overview

The relationship between the United States and India in terms of security and military cooperation witnessed a significant advancement since the Cold War, when Washington and New Delhi regularly found themselves on opposing sides on important issues. Despite sympathy from American authorities for New Delhi's aspiration for independence from the British Empire, tensions between the two nations intensified in the 1950s as Indian officials wanted to avoid an east-west alignment. The United States provided intelligence and other support to New Delhi

during the 1962 Sino-Indian War. In the 1970s, however, then-President Richard Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger worked to strengthen relationships with China and Pakistan. As a result, the United States supported Pakistan during its war with India in 1971, which strained ties with India for years (Weitz, 2017, pp. 2-3).

India-US defence and security ties substantially improved in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, US Presidents such as Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama made significant attempts to build relationships with Indian leaders and acknowledged India as an essential component of the American grand strategy in Asia. The defence technology collaboration, co-production, and co-development received more attention. Government to government (G2G) interactions had remarkably increased. This trend can be seen in the business world, where American and Indian defence companies have collaborated to form a global supply chain. By the end of 2019, it was anticipated that the bilateral defence trade between the two nations would total USD 18 billion (Upadhyay, 2019, p. 117).

Bill Clinton, the first post-Cold War American president, for instance, was too exceedingly engaged during the early years of his presidency in handling global developments in the aftermath of the Soviet disintegration to pay attention to India. Whatever little attention that was paid did not lead to optimism. India was put on the target list of Super 301 and Special 301 clauses of US Omnibus Foreign Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988. Assistant Secretary of State Robin Lynn Raphael (1993 to 1997) challenged the legal validity of Instrument of Accession that made Jammu and Kashmir part of India (Upadhyay, 2019, p. 117).

President Clinton did not receive the credential of the new Indian ambassador for about six months. All these developments signalled that negativity would largely govern US-Indian relations in the post-Cold War era. There is no denying that by the time President Clinton finished his tenure, US-Indian ties had undergone a significant transformation. When Clinton visited India in March 2000, a new framework for bilateral cooperation was established (Mahapatra, 2013, pp.194-195). If Clinton administration founded the groundwork for robust US-India ties, how would the George W. Bush administration design the US National Security Strategy toward India?

George W. Bush made it apparent throughout his election campaign that India would be given some weight in his broader foreign policy objectives while laying out his foreign policy priorities. However, the George W. Bush administration, during its first term, did not concentrate on India as a result of the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001 and the concurrent decision to invade Afghanistan. Instead, its major aims on the subcontinent were to prevent an Indo-Pakistani clash and sustain Pakistan's sporadic support for US war goals in Afghanistan (Ganguly, 2022, p. 10).

Nevertheless, President George W. Bush's proclamation of a new National Security Doctrine in 2002 was one of the first indications that the White House might change its perspective on India. In fact, according to the 2002 National Security Strategy document, "U.S. interests require a strong relationship with India." Paradoxically, the recognition of India as an official participant in the Indian Ocean area was not effectively manifested or proved via successful collaborations (U.S.-India Bilateral Agreements and "Global Partnership," 2006, p. 5). Given this state of affairs, would the bilateral relationship between India and the United States be given great priority during George W. Bush's second term?

Under the second George W. Bush administration, the US pledged to expand cooperation with India and reaffirmed a number of significant agreements. The Civilian Nuclear Cooperation agreement was the most well-known deal. The agreement was first announced in a joint statement released by President George W. Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on July 18, 2005. It lifted a three-decade ban on nuclear trade between the United States and India. It also strengthened cooperation between the United States and India in the areas of energy and satellite technology and provided US assistance to India's civilian nuclear energy programme as well. The deal was not, however, officially approved by the US Congress until October 2008 (Bajoria & Pan, 2010).

The United States benefited greatly from the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement or Indo-US Nuclear Deal. In this regard, Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, incessantly contended that as American contractors helped develop the facilities, which would aid India in moving away from coal, the US would enjoy significant environmental, economic, and diplomatic rewards. The agreement also imposed limitations on India's nuclear weapons programme. The 2005

agreement also lacked a clear strategic direction and fell short of transforming the relationship from an uncomplicated arms trade to a solid partnership (Pande, 2018, p.16)

On June 28, 2005, the US and India also inked a ten-year defence framework agreement, which pushed for more bilateral collaboration in a number of security-related areas, including defence trade, technology transfer, and counterterrorism cooperation. Following the 2005 framework, an agreement was struck in 2006 to cooperate in research, development, and trade to encourage the co-production of defence technology (Pedro, 2016, p. 27). The agreements reached between the United States and India in June and July 2005 signified a new set of milestones in the increasingly warming relations between the two most populous democracies in the world. In light of this, it is crucial to think about how the incoming government could impact US-India relations.

6. US-India Relationship under the Obama Administration: China's Factor

During its first year in office, the Obama administration showed little interest in pursuing high-level interactions with India or in creating a feasible strategy to strengthen ties. On the other hand, the Indian government found it challenging to seek substantive improvements in ties with Washington due to enduring leadership challenges in New Delhi. Early actions by the Obama administration failed to allay Indian concerns as New Delhi was evidently excluded from the list of foreign policy objectives promptly provided by the new administration. When Obama took office, "G-2" cooperation and "Chimerica" were frequent topics in US foreign policy circles. As a result, New Delhi was effectively demoted on Washington's list of foreign policy priorities in favour of full-bore collaboration with Beijing on a variety of global governance issues (Karl, 2013, p.3).

This was clearly evident in President Obama's 2009 major speech on American foreign policy in Asia, in which he vowed to "strengthen old alliances and develop new partnerships" in the region, yet curiously left India out. This disregard for India sparked irritation in New Delhi, where elites had grown accustomed to the prominence their nation had had in American geopolitical calculations during the George W. Bush administration (Karl, 2013, p.3). However, the US policy of extensive engagement with China started to change as a result of the abrupt reaction

President Obama received from Chinese officials both during his visit to Beijing in November 2009 and then again at the global climate summit in Copenhagen a month later. Reactively, Senior US officials reverted to the George W. Bush administration's emphasis on maximizing India's strategic potential as a check on China's rise at the US-India Strategic Dialogue's first meeting in June 2010 (Karl, 2013, p. 4).

Similarly, the joint statement, released in November 2010 during US President Barack Obama's visit to India, highlighted and praised the importance of the India-US global strategic relationship. A significant shift in the US posture was shown in Obama's statement that "the United States looks forward to a reformed UN Security Council that includes India as a permanent member." A shared vision for peace, security, and prosperity in Asia, the Indian Ocean area, and the Pacific region was mentioned (Sibal, 2015, p.107).

The rhetoric and substance of the India-US strategic partnership were once again strengthened during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US in September 2014. The joint statement praised the wide-ranging strategic and international partnership between the USA and India, with Prime Minister Modi emphasising that "the priority India accords to its partnership with the United States, a principal partner in the realisation of India's rise as a responsible, influential world power." In turn, President Obama stated that the United States benefited from India's rise as a friend and partner (Sibal, 2015, p.107).

In addition to that, the Obama administration's main concerns in Asia were China's growing military power and assertiveness, notably in the South and East China Seas and the region around the Indian Ocean. Beijing was also gaining increasing influence in the Middle East and Central Asia (Kronstadt & Pinto, 2012, p. 4). In response, the Obama administration strengthened its already-existing alliances in addition to building and extending its strategic partnerships with developing countries like India in order to maintain the balance of power in the area. In line with this, President Obama advocated for stronger defence and security relations between the US and India as the cornerstone of his rebalancing to Asia policy (Bader, 2014, p.13).

7. Obama's Rebalance to Asia Strategy: India's Role

In a speech to the Australian Parliament on November 17, 2011, US President Barack Obama announced a new foreign policy towards Asia-Pacific in an effort to restore the US dominance in the region. This strategy, which is referred to as "rebalancing," aimed to increase American influence in the Asia-Pacific for two reasons. First, because Asian nations called for a stronger US presence in the area to balance Beijing's aggressive foreign policy. Second, and probably more significantly, the US came to see Beijing as its main competitor for regional hegemony. The US therefore, pushed to increase its presence in the area as part of its containment policy towards China (Galace, 2016). Besides, Obama's rebalance for Asia encompassed developing strategic cooperation with major power centres like India. Hence, what part would India play in Obama's rebalancing policy?

According to US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter, the United States' relationship with India was a crucial component in its rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region in order to promote more stability and prosperity in the twenty-first century. He made clear that the US aimed to utilize "the unique strengths of India to confront critical challenges and meet emerging opportunities." In order to improve collaboration and cooperation with India, the United States simplified its internal procedures and security cooperation initiatives (Maitra, 2016, p. 54).

Similarly, in her 2011 article "America's Pacific Century," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asserted that the relationship between India and America would be one of the twenty-first century's most significant partners, grounded in similar values and interests. The United States made a strategic bet on India's future by predicting that its rising influence on the world stage would boost peace and security, despite the fact that there were still difficulties to be overcome and unresolved concerns on both sides (Maitra, 2016, p.67).

India was expected play a significant role in the Obama administration's Indo-Pacific policy for a variety of reasons. India, for instance, was seen as essential to the US strategy given that it connects, among other areas, Australia and Thailand, the Middle East and Central Asia, the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Lyons, 2022, p. 5). Moreover, China was the common adversary that Washington and New Delhi had to deal with. The People's Republic of China and India had been adversaries for a long time due to differences over

their shared borders, trade links, and China's backing for Pakistan. For the American side, as China's potential influence witnessed a remarkable growth, so did its hegemony, which put American interests in the Indo-Pacific area at jeopardy (Thakur & Padjett, 2018, p.14).

The Indo-US strategic partnership, therefore, took on an outstanding value under the Obama administration. High-level exchange visits from both sides at regular intervals were effective in this regard. More than any other state, India continued to take part in joint military exercises with the US, as constantly emphasised by Indian officials. Actually, the US and India's strategic interests were greatly concerned by Chinese engagement in the seaports of Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. In addition, the two parties signed a strategic agreement entitled "US-India Joint Strategic Vision" for Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Asia Pacific in 2015 (Wakil, Mustafa, and Shabbir, 2022, p.143). It appears that the bilateral ties between the two nations were strengthened and even fostered under the Obama presidency. In addition, China's rise presented opportunities for collaboration between the two countries, notably in the areas of security and defence.

8. US-India Defence Cooperation under Obama's Leadership

Defence cooperation was a key component of the US-India strategic partnership under the Obama administration. India made a concerted effort during the last ten years to advance in South Asia and compete with China on the economic and military fronts. India, which had historically lagged behind in military modernization, saw China as a significant challenge. So in order to attain its strategic goals, India began to align itself with the US arms industry as the Prime Minister Narendra Modi administration began to invest substantially in its military build-up with the intention of modernizing the aging Indian armed forces (Khan, 2017, p.100).

For instance, in the bilateral framework agreements signed in 2005 and 2015, the United States and India designated key sectors of defence cooperation as their main priorities. The agreements mentioned more than a dozen possible areas of cooperation between the two military institutions. The documents instructed the respective military establishments to take part in activities that would support that larger objective, such as regular military drills, improving military education and training, increasing intelligence sharing, and cooperating in multinational operations. Doing so is in their interests, even though they refrained from naming

interoperability as a goal (Abercrombie, 2019, p.128). The extent of defence cooperation between the two nations may be well seen in the defence discussions, technological transfers, and defence commerce.

8.1. Defence Dialogues and Agreements

The breadth and complexity of the defence dialogues between the Indian defence ministers and their counterparts in Washington demonstrated the extent of defence cooperation between the two nations (Khan, 2017, p.101). Likewise, the various bilateral defence agreements that were signed between the two countries under the framework of the strategic partnership amply indicated the level of defence cooperation between the two nations. The following are the most prominent agreements that were jointly signed by Washington and New Delhi during the Obama administration.

8.1.1. The Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)

The Defence Technology and Trade Initiative was introduced in 2012. It served as a tool to speed up and simplify bureaucratic procedures and legal requirements in the two countries, thereby facilitating and accelerating defence collaboration, including research, co-development, and technology transfer. One of its goals was to increase bilateral economic relations beyond the buyer-seller dynamic in order to boost India's defence industrial base (Bajpai, 2022). The DTTI gained more notoriety after President Barack Obama's visit to India in January 2015, when the two countries' leaders jointly instructed their governments to pursue co-production and co-development of four pathfinder projects, to form a working group to explore aircraft carrier technology sharing and design, and explore possible cooperation on development of jet engine technology (Tellis, 2015).

The initiative was invigorated with the intention to remove the administrative obstacles that previously caused difficulties to the workflow of joint decisions or statements. The DTTI sparked discussions of joint initiatives and projects involving aircraft carriers, jet engines, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, chemical and biological defence, naval systems, and air

systems. Additionally, it included two agreements for government-to-government projects in the fields of science and technology: mobile hybrid power sources and next-generation protective ensembles. Along with sharing technologies for radars, gas turbine engines, and night vision, the DTTI also planned to collaborate on the construction of aircraft carriers (Upadhyay, 2019, p.118). It appears that the 2012 DTTI, in the end, transformed the buyer-seller nature of India-US defence ties into a partnership centered on co-development and co-production. It gave an impetus to senior officials from both nations to frequently work together to improve the opportunities in the field of defence.

8.1.2. The Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)

Years of frivolous attempts have been made by the United States to persuade India to ratify three fundamental accords that would enhance military cooperation and cement defence relations between the two countries. Ultimately, on August 29, 2016, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was signed. The two nations signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in August 2016, while Manohar Parrikar, the Indian Minister of Defence, was in Washington, DC. Basically, the LEMOA is only a functional agreement to account for the necessities that one nation would offer (at its port or airport facility) to the visiting military force of the other. The US has agreements like this with more than a hundred nations across the world. However, it is impossible to deny the agreement's enormous symbolic and geopolitical significance (Khurana & Gurpreet, 2016, p.1).

Nevertheless, the negotiations for the other two accords continued for further years. The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed on September 6, 2018. The third agreement, which accomplishes the trio of the basic mutual accords for wide range defence cooperation between New Delhi and Washington, is the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for Geospatial Intelligence, which was signed on October 27, 2020. The signing of the LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA signalled the beginning of a close military cooperation (Rosen, LLM, & Jackson, 2017, p. iii).

8.2. The Scope of US-Indian Cooperation

As it has already been mentioned, the deep defence cooperation with India was part of the Obama Administration's rebalancing or the pivot to the Asia Pacific, which is a continuation and expansion of policies already undertaken by previous administrations. The dramatic shift and concrete elements of the Obama Administration's declared "rebalancing" toward the Asia-Pacific, however, lie in the military realm. This was especially evident through the evolvement of defence ties from simply military-to-military links into an established partnership that covered a variety of security and defence issues. The emphasis of this study, however, is on high-tech exchanges, defence commerce, and bilateral military exercises.

8.2.1. High-Technology Transfer

In response to India's repeated demands for the transfer of sensitive defence-related technologies, the US administration took a variety of administrative and judicial actions to encourage such transfers. In spite of these efforts, some technologies remained off-limits, including some that the US did not share even with its closest treaty allies or that were not good candidates for transfer because US companies that own the relevant technology lacked a business case, according to Indian officials who occasionally expressed their disappointment (Abercrombie, 2019, p.131).

In order to strengthen its military capabilities, to support its domestic defence sector, and diversify its sources of defence equipment, India sought access to high-quality US technology. In addition to sales, the United States aimed to increase defence trade with India to enhance interoperability with the Indian armed services. That the two nations have decided to explore co-production and co-development and make it easier for the transfer of defence technologies to India marks a significant development for India. As a result of both sides' efforts to educate one another about their respective acquisition procedures, the United States and India have made significant progress so far. Washington relaxed export restrictions for India, and New Delhi was willing to embrace new end-use monitoring tape (Abercrombie, 2019, p. 131).

8.2.2. Defence Trade

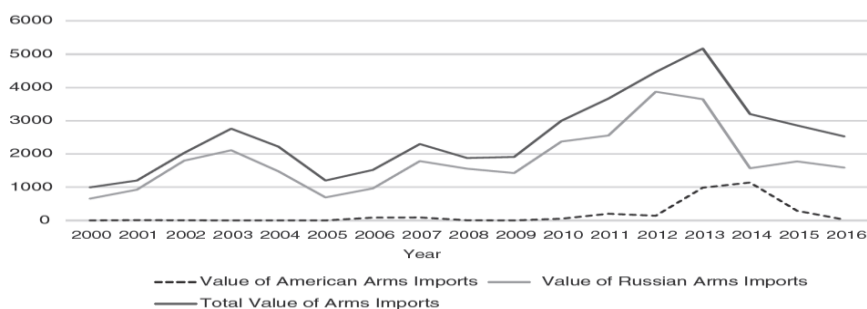
In order to provide India's armed forces with the most cutting-edge and dependable weaponry available, President Obama applauded India's decision to acquire important military systems

from the United States. The two countries leaders welcomed the ensuing increased collaboration and pointed out that when India made significant defence purchases, it did so for both economic and geopolitical reasons (Holland & Brunnstrom, 2014).

So, as part of the expanding defence trade, India made an agreement with Boeing to buy twelve P8-I Long Range Maritime Surveillance aircraft in addition to the six C130J transport planes it had ordered. It was also supplied by American corporations by the medium multi-role combat aircraft that the Indian Air Force hoped to buy. This arrangement involved a \$10 billion swap. Another contract that was in the works was the procurement of the C-17 Globemaster-III transport aircraft. This anticipated deal led to the creation of more jobs in the United States and provided an unrivalled strategic lift capability (Sekhon & Purushothaman, 2010/2011, p. 3).

Overall, The Indian army received state-of-the-art equipment during Obama's two presidential terms. In that time, India bought 24 Harpoon Block II missiles, 24 C-130 JS Super Hercules, 10 C-17 cargo planes, 8 P-8I aircraft, and 10 Apache Gunship Helicopters (Wakil, Mustafa & Shabbir, 2022, p. 145). The following figure depicts the substantial increase in American arms sales to India during the Obama administration, despite the fact that India did not import the majority of its military equipment from the US.

Fig. 1: India's Arms Exports and Imports' Value



Source: Colley & Ganguly (2020, p.57)

In fact, due to the historic nuclear agreement of 2005, Indo-US defence trade grew remarkably at a rate that had never been witnessed in the past 10 years. A number of New Delhi's traditional suppliers were forced out as a result of the massive rise in trade, and Washington progressed to become one of India's primary arms suppliers. By gaining 13 arms contracts for \$288.95 billion

in the years 2013-2014 and 2015-2016, the US defeated rivals like Russia, which had been India's primary supplier of weaponry since the early 1960s (Behera & Balachandran, 2018, p. 338).

8.2.3. Military Exercises

The most noticeable aspect of defence cooperation between the United States and India under the Obama presidency was military-to-military exercises. According to some analysts, the military cooperation between the United States and India during the Obama presidency could be characterised as an "exercise-based relationship." In addition to Malabar, the Indian and American Navies took part in three more annual exercises. The focus of naval drills was on anti-submarine warfare, anti-piracy, and disaster response. In addition to their close collaboration, India has begun to exercise maritime leadership independently of the United States, as indicated by the founding of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in 2008 (Pedro, 2016, pp. 27-28).

The majority of joint military exercises were conducted by the US and India, both of which had substantial military presences in the maritime sector. The US and Indian warships had routinely cooperated during operations. Both navies have engaged in cooperative anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008. Additionally, when Indian Defence Minister Parrikar visited the US in December 2015, it was convened that India would participate in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, which the US Navy would conduct off the coast of Hawaii. India also expressed interest in the Red Flag Exercise, an aerial combat training between the US Navy and Air Force and the Indian Air Force; employing the newest ideas or techniques, that was held every three months for a period of almost two weeks (Hanif & Khan, 2018, p. 9).

9. Conclusion

In 2011, the Obama administration announced a pivot or rebalancing strategy to Asia. This policy rested upon the foundation of strong US relations with countries throughout the region. India was a key nation among these Asian states. President Obama gave much importance to the American relationship with India and insisted on expanding and deepening US cooperation with New Delhi as an integral part of the rebalance. The Obama administration welcomed India's

constructive contribution to ensuring a stable, peaceful, and prosperous region. This was clearly evident in his 2010 and 2015 national security strategy documents, in which India was described as a vital strategic partner, mainly in maintaining the balance of power and preserving the American hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region.

That said, defence cooperation was an essential component of the strategic partnership between the United States and India. Under President Obama's two terms, the military relations strengthened, mostly due to the China's growing economic and military power in the region. The US-India defence connections developed from being only about military-to military contacts into a well-established collaboration that involved dialogues, defence trade, and technology transfer in addition to other areas.

Briefly stated, the Obama administration through the rebalance strategy aimed to assert American leadership in Asia, maintain and strengthen a stable security system in the region, as well as counteract China's suffocating influence. In order to accomplish this objective, his administration emphasised the value of partners and friends, like India, in two terms national security strategy documents. The advanced defence cooperation between the two nations allowed, therefore, for a strong indication of the US-Indo strategic partnership. In light of the threat stemming from the strategic rivalry that China posed to both the US and India in the region and the World, further research is more than recommended to investigate the vision of the successive US administrations over the strategic cooperation with India.

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