



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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THE INDIA–UNITED STATES (US) RELATIONSHIP

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs,” and the topic details related to the INDIA- US relationship.

Syllabus mapping: GS-2: IR: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests.

Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

For Prelims:

What are the important dialogues forums, and agreements between India and the US?

For Mains:

How the relationship between India and the US has been evolved over a period and what are the issues, and future prospects of relations?

Why In News

India and the United States have signed a **Cultural Property Agreement** to repatriate stolen Indian artifacts from the US. Under the agreement, both countries will work together to also prevent and prohibit illicit trade, import, export, and trafficking of archaeological and ethnological materials. This is India’s first-ever Cultural Property Agreement with the US.



Introduction:

The relationship between the United States and India is one of the most strategic and consequential of the 21st century. The United States supports India's emergence as a leading global power and a vital partner in promoting a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

India and the United States enjoy a comprehensive global strategic partnership covering almost all areas of human endeavor, driven by shared democratic values, convergence of interests on a range of issues, and vibrant people-to-people contacts.

Dialogue Mechanisms between India and the U.S.:

1. **India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum (TPF) (2005): Purpose:** Discuss market access and trade-related matters
2. **India-U.S. Commercial Dialogue. Focus Areas:** Standards, ease of doing business, travel & tourism
3. **India-U.S. CEO Forum: Function:** Meets on sidelines of the Commercial Dialogue, provides recommendations
4. **Information and Communications Technology (ICT) : Purpose:** Discuss cooperation in the electronics & IT sector
5. **India-U.S. Economic and Financial Partnership (EFP):** Finance Minister and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury
6. **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)**
7. **2+2 Dialogue:** This is to discuss the vast areas of cooperation minister of external affairs and the defence minister participate in this dialogue.

Key Areas of Cooperation:

Trade & Economic Relations: USA is India's largest trading partner with bilateral trade in goods and services crossing US\$ 191 billion in 2022. In 2022 bilateral merchandise trade reached US\$ 133 billion and services trade reached around US\$ 58 billion.

Defense and Security: The defense and security collaboration between the U.S. and India is a cornerstone of their strategic partnership. **Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology [iCET]** was launched by the National Security Advisors in Washington, DC on 31 January 2023 to facilitate strategic technology collaborations in critical and emerging technologies, co-development, and co-production and connect the respective innovation ecosystems, especially in AI, quantum, telecom, space, biotech, semiconductors, emerging defense technologies and biotech.

Multilateral Cooperation: The U.S.-India partnership extends into various multilateral organizations and forums. India's successful **G20** presidency and its role in hosting the summit underscore its leadership in global economic and development issues. **The Quad**—a diplomatic network including

Australia, Japan, and the U.S.—focuses on promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region. India's involvement in the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework** for Prosperity and the **Indian Ocean Rim Association** further demonstrates its significant role in regional and global economic frameworks.

Clean Energy: Both countries are working on various projects and policies to achieve ambitious climate goals. They are enhancing minerals security cooperation to support these goals, as evidenced by initiatives like the Minerals Security Partnership. The India-U.S. New and Emerging Renewable Energy Technologies Action Platform (RE-TAP) promotes collaboration on renewable energy technologies, while the **Strategic Clean Energy Partnership and the Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue** facilitate broader clean energy cooperation.

Health Cooperation: There is a longstanding research collaboration in the health sector to develop new therapeutics and diagnostics. Under the Bilateral Vaccine Action Program (VAP) a ROTAVAC® vaccine to counter diarrhea in children was developed by an Indian company at an affordable cost.

Education & Cultural Cooperation: Education partnership is an important pillar of India-US ties with strong linkages and a history of higher education collaborations. Under the **Fulbright-Nehru Binational Program**, both countries support Fulbright-Nehru scholarships and grants to US and Indian scholars, professionals, and students. The Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) was launched by India in 2015 to facilitate visits by 1000 U.S. teachers annually to teach in India. GIAN has been extended to other countries also

The Science and Technology Cooperation: The Indo-US Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF), promotes cooperation in S & T and innovation. U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and India's DST, MeITY, and DBT signed Implementation Arrangements to support research collaboration in AI, advanced communication networks, quantum science, Internet of Things, Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems, biotechnology manufacturing, biosafety and biosecurity.

Space Exploration: In space exploration, the partnership has been marked by India's signing of the Artemis Accords, aligning both nations on a vision for human spaceflight and commercial collaboration. The joint efforts include NASA providing advanced training for Indian astronauts, with the goal of a joint mission to the International Space Station. Additionally, India's investment in a Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory reflects a commitment to groundbreaking space cooperation.

People-to-People Ties: The relationship between the United States and India is further enriched by robust people-to-people ties. With over 200,000 Indian students in U.S. universities and an Indian diaspora of over 4 million contributing to innovation and economic growth, these personal and educational connections play a crucial role in strengthening the bilateral relationship.

Major hurdles to brighter India-US relations:

Geo-economics: Trade tensions have been a persistent problem, exacerbated by Trump's criticism of India's high tariffs and trade surplus. The U.S. response to India's data localization norms and e-commerce policies, including suspending tariff-free exports under the **Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)**, has led to retaliatory measures from India. **Tariffs & Trade Barriers:** There are concerns about the High tariffs in Indian markets and market-distorting US farmers' support programs.

Geostrategic: The U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has led to renewed sanctions on Iran, affecting global oil prices and impacting Indian investments in Iran, including the crucial Chabahar port. Despite some mitigation through oil market stabilization and shifting Indian energy strategies, challenges persist.

Defense Issues: The U.S.-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) has faced issues due to mismatched expectations—India views it as a means to access advanced U.S. technology, while the U.S. sees it as a platform to sell hardware.

Afghanistan Approach: The U.S. and India have shared goals for a stable and democratic Afghanistan but diverge in their approaches. India remains wary of potential concessions the U.S. might make to the Taliban in peace negotiations, reflecting broader concerns about the future stability and governance of Afghanistan.

Strategic autonomy: The U.S. is concerned about India's continued acquisition of Russian arms, fearing it strengthens Russia's position and complicates U.S.-India defense collaboration. India also worries about potential U.S. sanctions under CAATSA, which they see as undermining the bilateral relationship. U.S. participants acknowledge this but stress that Russia's adversarial role complicates U.S.-India defense ties.

Indo-Pacific: In Southeast Asia, India is adopting a more assertive approach, focusing on hard security and economic integration through the Quad, while balancing its engagements amid deteriorating relations with China. The U.S. aims to restore its influence through softer diplomatic engagement and new economic instruments, though progress will depend on public attitudes and regional trade dynamics.

Khalistan issue: Concerns regarding pro-Khalistan activities in the US, including recent incidents like vandalism of the Indian consulate in San Francisco. While the US has condemned such acts, there is frustration over the perceived lack of firm official responses and media coverage.

Recommendations for Enhanced India-U.S. Cooperation

1. **Technology cooperation:** Enhance cooperation in emerging technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) as data regulation, information sharing, and privacy protection become increasingly salient issues crucial to the preservation of national security.
2. **Aligning Bilateral with Multilateral Priorities:** Effective coordination with regional and global stakeholders is crucial. Both India and the U.S. need to align their bilateral strategies with broader multilateral goals to address shared challenges and opportunities. the Quad, and the West Asian Quad or I2U2.
3. **Counterterrorism:** Pursue greater cooperation on counterterrorism, including coordinating strategies for managing a Taliban-led Afghanistan and leading multilateral efforts to apply pressure on the Pakistani military-intelligence complex to abandon support for terrorist groups such as the Taliban and Haqqani Network, and Kashmir-focused groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba.

4. **Economic cooperation:** Strengthen and integrate GVCs using FDI in each other's economies to strengthen bilateral trade and integrate GVCs as well as incentivize multinational corporations to participate in these initiatives.
5. **Cybersecurity Coordination:** Seek greater coordination between line ministries working on cybersecurity, especially identifying relevant counterparts on specific issues.
6. **Climate change and Clean energy:** U.S.-India cooperation in the environmental domain includes several major initiatives aimed at addressing climate change, promoting sustainability, and enhancing environmental protection. Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership, The U.S.-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership, The Clean Energy Finance Initiative, and Forest and Biodiversity Conservation.
7. **Non-interfere in internal matters:** The issues of Khalistan must be addressed to avoid any escalation. Moreover, the US unwarranted comment on Jammu and Kashmir should be avoided.

Conclusion:

India-U.S. relations are poised for significant expansion over the next decade, with a focus on several key areas including emerging technology and national security, defense cooperation, and aligning bilateral priorities with multilateral goals. Additionally, enhanced collaboration in defense and counterterrorism, along with deepened trade relations, will be crucial. Additionally, promising areas like education and outer space offer further opportunities for joint initiatives. Effective coordination both bilaterally and with global stakeholders will be essential for shaping the trajectory of India-U.S. relations, especially in response to changing threat perceptions and strategic shifts in the Indo-Pacific and Eurasian regions.

Prelims Question:

Q. Consider the following statements:

Statement-I:

In 2024, India and the United Kingdom have signed a Cultural Property Agreement.

Statement-II:

Under the agreement, both countries will work together to prevent and prohibit illicit trade, import, export, and trafficking of archaeological and ethnological materials.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect

(d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

Answer: d.

MAINS QUESTION:

How do the shared democratic values and convergence of interests between India and the United States shape their comprehensive global strategic partnership across diverse areas of human endeavor?

(250 words 15 mark)

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