



Analyzing U.S.-India Military and Non-Military Agreements: Regional Implications for Pakistan and China

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Abstract

South Asia is on the brink of a renewed arms race, as major and regional powers seek to assert their strategic influence in the region. The United States and China are engaged in a broader geopolitical rivalry, supporting India and Pakistan respectively to counter each other's regional dominance. The United States, as the sole superpower following the disintegration of the Soviet

Union, views the rise of China as a significant threat to its hegemony. In response, it is vigorously supporting India across multiple domains to contain China's influence. The strategic partnership between India and the United States has intensified the arms race in South Asia. As part of this alliance, several key defense agreements have been signed, including the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), which enables India to receive advanced communication technologies, and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), through which India gains access to data from over four thousand U.S. satellites. Additionally, the United States has facilitated the transfer of drone technology and granted a waiver for India's acquisition of the Russian-made S-400 missile defense system. These developments have increased the strategic vulnerability of both Pakistan and China. Beyond military cooperation, India's growing partnership with the United States also extends to high-technology collaboration and coordination within regional and international organizations, further complicating the strategic environment for Pakistan and China. In response, Pakistan is exploring alternative strategies to counterbalance India's enhanced capabilities. This research examines the potential implications of the expanding Indo-U.S. strategic partnership on the security and defense of Pakistan and China and to propose policy options to mitigate the emerging threats.

Key Words: India, United States, Pakistan, China, Military cooperation, Strategic Partnership, Regional Security, Arms Race.

Introduction

Former United States President Barack Obama described the Indo-U.S. partnership as the most important partnership of the 21st century, based on shared values and common interests. The United States has declared India a major defense partner and is providing sophisticated technologies in order to combat the growing assertiveness of China in the region. For this purpose, Washington and New Delhi have signed various military and non-military pacts. These pacts have direct and indirect implications for the security and defense of both Pakistan and China. This paper attempts to analyze these pacts and highlight their potential implications for Pakistan and China.

Historically, the United States of America and India enjoyed friendly relations until the signing of the 1970s 20-year friendship treaty between the Soviet Union and India. Initially, Indian

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Prime Minister Nehru was the torchbearer of amicable ties between the United States and India during his 1949 visit to the United States.¹ Similarly, the 1962 conflict between Beijing and New Delhi paved the way for improved U.S.-Indian relations. To support India during the 1962 conflict, the United States provided military and logistical assistance. However, Indian policy elites expressed concern over Pakistan's alignment with the U.S.-led capitalist bloc. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, India sought to safeguard its national interests by pursuing a policy of non-alignment, distancing itself from both the U.S.-led capitalist and Soviet-led communist blocs during the early phases of the Cold War.²

The beginning of the new century brought new life to the relations between New Delhi and Washington. The turning point in the relationship between India and the United States was the signing of the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which both nations signed in 2002. This agreement commits them to work together to elevate their relationship to the next level. It is imperative to mention that under the leadership of former President Barack Obama and former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, both countries struck a civilian nuclear agreement that allowed India to meet its nuclear energy needs, even though India had not joined the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), a group of forty-eight nuclear supplier countries that seek to promote the export of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and to discourage nuclear-related exports for military use.

As per the agreement signed by the United States administration and the Indian government, India would submit fourteen of its twenty-two nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for safeguarding. The IAEA would be authorized to inspect these nuclear power facilities and ensure that they are not misused. In return, the United States would provide India with nuclear technology that could be used for both civilian and military purposes. This technology would include equipment for refining plutonium and enriching uranium, both essential processes for developing nuclear weapons. Additionally, nuclear reactor fuel would be supplied to India, to be used for medical applications and domestic electricity production.³

¹ Rajan Menon, "India, and the Soviet Union: A New Stage of Relations?" *Asian Survey* 18, no. 7 (1978): 731–750.

² Harsh V. Pant and Julie M. Super, "India's 'Non-Alignment' Conundrum: A Twentieth-Century Policy in a Changing World," *International Affairs* 91, no. 4 (2015): 747–764.

³ Rajesh Rajagopalan, "India and NSG: It's Simply Power Politics," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 11, no. 3 (2016): 201–206.

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The partnership between Washington and New Delhi reached a historic high during the tenure of former U.S. President Donald Trump. Under his leadership, the United States signed three major defense pacts with India: the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). It is pertinent to mention that these three foundational agreements are prerequisites for a country to be designated as a major defense partner of the United States.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyze the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership and its implications. Primary data includes official government documents and bilateral agreements from the United States, India, Pakistan, and China. Secondary sources consist of scholarly literature, policy papers, and expert analyses in the field of strategic studies. Qualitative content analysis is used to interpret the nature and intent of the agreements, while quantitative data supports assessments of defense cooperation and resource allocation. This approach provides a balanced understanding of both the strategic context and measurable impact of the partnership.

Structural Realism and Regional Power Dynamics

This study is grounded in the theoretical lens of structural realism, which posits that the international system is inherently anarchic due to the absence of a central authority or “Leviathan” to regulate state behavior and prevent inter-state aggression. Under this framework, states are rational actors that prioritize survival, leading to recurring patterns of power competition. Structural realism explains the security dilemma, wherein one state's pursuit of security through military or strategic enhancement is perceived as a threat by others, prompting countermeasures and resulting in a continuous cycle of balancing and hedging strategies. This dynamic fosters the emergence of a balance of power system, as states compete to counter each other's growing capabilities.

In this context, China's efforts to secure its strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific, particularly through expanding its regional influence and mitigating the Malacca Dilemma via alternative trade routes, have been perceived by the United States as a challenge to its dominance. In response, the United States has strengthened its strategic partnership with India through a series

of military and non-military agreements. One of the most notable among these is the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), one of three foundational defense agreements aimed at enhancing interoperability and strategic cooperation. These developments have direct security and military implications for both Pakistan and China, reinforcing the structural realist view of competition and balancing in an anarchic global order.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)

The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was ratified by the United States and India on August 29, 2016, during the visit of Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar to Washington, D.C. More than one hundred countries worldwide have signed similar agreements with the United States. Essentially, LEMOA is a functional agreement that enables a government to account for essential supplies and services provided by another country, such as access to ports or airport facilities, for a visiting military force. However, the geopolitical and symbolic implications of such an agreement cannot be overlooked. Notably, although the concept was initially proposed in 2002, it was finalized at a strategically critical moment.

Historically, India and the United States have engaged in limited military logistics exchanges, mostly during joint exercises. LEMOA significantly alters this transactional framework. Previously, each exchange was treated as a separate case, with payments made in cash for goods or services rendered. Under LEMOA, each side maintains a ledger of operations, and outstanding balances are settled at the end of the fiscal year, with credits offsetting debits. The agreement is significant not only for its operational practicality but also because it establishes a standing logistics framework between the two countries.⁴

Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)

To be designated a Major Defence Partner of the United States, a country is required to sign three foundational security agreements: LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA.⁵ Despite initial resistance and delays, India ultimately signed all three agreements, allowing the U.S. to formally grant it the status of a major defence partner. India's hesitation stemmed from its long-standing

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Manoj Joshi, "Get Closer, but Not Too (Much) Closer," *Vayu Aerospace and Defense Review* 5 (2018): 4.

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policy of strategic neutrality and its historically cordial relations with Russia, the successor state of the former Soviet Union.

India eventually conceded to the long-standing U.S. request to sign the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). The agreement was finalized on September 6, 2018, during a 2+2 ministerial dialogue hosted by the Indian government. Present at the signing were U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, and Indian Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

India had already acquired a considerable amount of advanced military hardware from the United States to modernize its armed forces. However, the use of this equipment necessitated a secure, encrypted communication system. Prior to COMCASA, India depended on U.S.-based private companies for communication services, which, while functional, posed serious cybersecurity risks due to the vulnerability of commercial software to hacking and surveillance. These concerns impeded the optimal performance of U.S. defence systems in the Indian military.

COMCASA was signed to mitigate the risk of high-level security breaches and to establish a secure, government-to-government communication channel. This not only eliminated the threat of interception but also symbolized a growing trust between the two nations. India had previously feared that the U.S. could use its relationship with Pakistan to monitor Indian military communications, compromising its strategic autonomy and privacy.

Furthermore, the agreement enabled India to access additional advanced American weaponry. Historically, around 80% of India's arms imports came from Russia. However, COMCASA now incentivizes India to procure more sophisticated systems from the U.S. in order to fully leverage secure communications technologies.

The Trump administration placed significant emphasis on expanding defence ties with India and promoting arms sales. For instance, in February 2019, the U.S. offered India two 777 Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasure Self-Protection Suites for \$190 million, an offer accepted shortly after India supported the U.S. in acquiring 72,400 SIG 716 assault rifles.⁶

⁶ Jeff Smith, "Modi 2.0: Navigating Differences and Consolidating Gains in India-US Relations," *The Heritage Foundation* 5 (2019).

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)

The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) was the fourth and final foundational defence agreement signed between the United States and India. It was concluded in October 2020 during a 2+2 ministerial dialogue, with the U.S. delegation represented by the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the Indian delegation led by the Ministers of External Affairs and Defense.⁷

Under BECA, India gains access to advanced U.S. geospatial intelligence, including real-time data related to the tracking of enemy submarines, missile threats, and other high-risk military assets. This data enhances the precision of Indian automated systems, such as drones, missiles, and long-range navigation and targeting systems. The agreement also provides access to high-quality geographic and aeronautical data, supporting both military targeting and civilian applications such as air traffic management, map accuracy, and disaster response. Crucially, BECA facilitates India's use of the American GPS system, significantly improving its navigational and targeting capabilities.

Importantly, BECA is not limited to conflict scenarios. Its application extends to peacetime operations, such as maritime domain awareness and scientific collaboration. The agreement also paves the way for data sharing between the U.S. and India, particularly concerning space-based intelligence. The U.S. maintains a vast network of geostationary satellites, while India's space agency, ISRO, has launched numerous satellites for Earth observation. Through BECA, both nations aim to coordinate surveillance and monitoring efforts, especially in response to their shared strategic concerns regarding China.

Some maritime and strategic experts argue that India stands to benefit significantly from BECA, particularly through access to the extensive logistical infrastructure and satellite network of the United States. In return, India is expected to share on-the-ground intelligence from the Indian Ocean region, thereby supporting America's strategic presence in the area.

However, critics contend that such agreements may erode India's strategic autonomy. The negotiations surrounding BECA, like the earlier foundational pacts, took nearly a decade to

⁷ Ibid.

conclude, reflecting persistent internal debate. Opposition members in the Indian Parliament have raised concerns about the lack of parliamentary scrutiny, questioning why such a critical agreement was not openly debated before ratification. These concerns underscore ongoing reservations about the transparency and implications of India's deepening defence ties with the United States.⁸

Technology as a Strategic Vector in Indo-U.S. Relations

In today's world, the instrumental role of technology cannot be ignored, and any form of electronic development based on technology cannot be undermined, as every state is increasingly dependent on it. Therefore, to further enhance their strategic partnership, India and the United States have signed several agreements in the domain of technology.⁹ The Indo-U.S. strategic partnership began with an initiative launched in 2004, titled the "Next Steps in Strategic Partnership" (NSSP). The objective of this strategic initiative was to strengthen bilateral relations between the two democracies. Under the NSSP, both countries agreed to expand cooperation in three key areas: civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programs, and high-tech trade. Furthermore, Prime Minister Modi's visit to the United States in 2023 further strengthened and deepened the relationship between the two countries, leading to the signing of new agreements in the field of technology.¹⁰

In the recent visit, the first pact was signed to strengthen semiconductor manufacturing and improve its supply chain. Semiconductors are used in almost all electronic items that are manufactured and used around the world. Micron Technology, Inc., an American-based company, with the support of India's Semiconductor Mission, will invest in a semiconductor assembly and test facility in India. This company will develop its assembly unit and test plant in the city of Gujarat. This project will require an investment of USD 2.75 billion, of which Micron will invest \$825 million, while the rest will be financed by the Indian government to establish a test assembly for semiconductors.

⁸ Gurpreet S. Khurana, "Optimizing India-US Maritime-Strategic Convergence," *Strategic Analysis* 41, no. 5 (2017): 433-446.

⁹ The White House, "FACT SHEET: The United States and India – Global Leadership in Action," *The White House*, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/fact-sheet-the-united-states-and-india-global-leadership-in-action/>.

¹⁰ Jarrett Renshaw, "Flurry of US-India Deals on AI, Defense as Biden, Modi Meet," *Reuters*, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-modi-meet-flurry-new-us-india-deals-2023-06-22/>.

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In addition, the purpose of the United States is to diversify its supply chain and reduce dependence on the People's Republic of China. For that reason, India and the U.S. ended their dispute at the World Trade Organization (WTO), and India, on the other hand, also reduced some tariffs on goods imported from the United States.¹¹

Besides semiconductors, the two countries also signed a pact under the Critical Minerals Partnership (CMP). For states around the world, it is very important to control access to minerals in the current era, as those which control minerals can manufacture a wide range of products. There are different kinds of minerals, such as generic and rare earth minerals. These types of minerals are not commonly found in every country. Some nations are naturally blessed with them; therefore, to fulfill their mineral needs, several countries have signed the Critical Minerals Partnership (CMP). The U.S. welcomed India as the latest member of this partnership.

The Mineral Security Partnership (MSP) was announced in June 2020 by the U.S. to strengthen critical mineral supply chains. In the early stages of this agreement, India was not a part of it. It was initiated by 11 member states. The MSP included Australia, Finland, France, Canada, Germany, Japan, Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. These critical minerals are resources that are essential for the economy, and the absence of these minerals creates vulnerabilities and supply chain risks. These minerals include cobalt, nickel, lithium, and the 17 “rare earth” elements. Critical minerals are used in nearly all electronic items, such as mobile phones, tablets, electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines, fiber optic cables, and in defense and medical applications.¹²

The New Frontier in Space is the third pact signed during the 2023 meeting between the two heads of state. India also signed the Artemis Accords, which is an accord similar in spirit to the Apollo program. The goal of this program is to promote a common vision for space exploration for the benefit of all humankind. It was launched on October 13, 2020, with eight founding member states: Australia, Luxembourg, Canada, Japan, Italy, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates. Ecuador, the fifth-largest oil producer in 2020, became the 26th state to

¹¹ Nandita Bose and Patricia Zengerle, “Biden, Modi Hail New Era for US-India Ties and Tout Deals,” *Reuters*, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-modi-strengthen-ties-with-defense-trade-agreements-2023-06-22/>.

¹² Seema Prasad, “Minerals Security Partnership: India Joins the Critical Minerals Club. Here’s Why This Is Important,” *Down to Earth*, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/energy/minerals-security-partnership-india-joins-the-critical-minerals-club-here-s-why-this-is-important-90278>.

sign the Accords on June 21, 2023, just before Indian Prime Minister Modi announced India's decision to join.

The Artemis Accords are a non-binding multilateral arrangement between governments around the world. It is an American-led effort to return humans to the Moon by 2025, with the long-term goal of expanding human exploration to other planets, such as Mars and beyond.¹³

The fourth and final pact in the sphere of technology signed between the U.S. and India is focused on Cutting-Edge Research. The U.S. National Science Foundation announced 35 new research areas for collaboration with the Indian Department of Science and Technology. Additionally, a new agreement was signed with the Indian Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on emerging technologies.

A key component of this pact is the "Innovation Handshake," aimed at further promoting startups. To support and strengthen the U.S.-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), the future commercial dialogue between the U.S. and India will include this new "Innovation Handshake" to enhance both countries' startup ecosystems.

Under the banner of this initiative, Indian Prime Minister Modi met with CEOs of Google, Apple, Microsoft, and other tech giants. In these meetings, PM Modi also highlighted the Indian government's efforts to address regulatory hurdles that previously challenged innovation and business growth.¹⁴

Indian Diaspora in the US

The Indian citizens and students are living in great numbers in the United States. They are part of various sectors in the U.S., whether it is a university, government, or any private institution. Therefore, the Indian lobby enjoys a stronghold in the U.S., and time and again, it helps the Indian government to gain the support of the U.S. on international and regional issues.¹⁵ Since the 1990s,

¹³ U.S. Department of State, "The Republic of India Signs the Artemis Accords," *United States Department of State*, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/the-republic-of-india-signs-the-artemis-accords/>.

¹⁴ Bose and Zengerle, "Biden, Modi Hail New Era for US-India Ties and Tout Deals | Reuters."

¹⁵ *The Economist*, "India's Diaspora Is Bigger and More Influential than Any in History," accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.economist.com/international/2023/06/12/indias-diaspora-is-bigger-and-more-influential-than-any-in-history>.

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Indian lobbyists in the U.S. have focused on countering the Pakistani lobby groups in different states, which held a very strong position and presence in the U.S. during the Cold War.

In this regard, Indian-Americans faced their first significant test while defending India's 1998 nuclear tests, the act through which India declared herself a nuclear power in defiance of international law. The second challenge was revealing Pakistan's military position during the Kargil War in 1999 and shaping a more India-narrated interpretation of the Kashmir issue. However, in 2008, the real power of the Indian lobby was confirmed when the U.S.-India Civilian Nuclear Agreement bill was presented in the U.S. Congress. In this case, to highlight the peaceful usage of India's nuclear program, the Indian lobby strongly emphasized the positive aspects of the civilian atomic agreement in Congress, ensuring its safe use.

The members of the Indian lobby group, known as the Samosa Caucus, were in charge of changing the unfavorable perception of India that predominated in the United States during the Cold War. This lobby highlighted India's democratic credentials, the economic benefits of its market, and its expanding strategic significance. When forty congressional representatives attended Modi's September 2014 address in Manhattan and when he addressed a joint session of Congress two years later, it was evident that there was rising support for India in the U.S. Congress.

In addition, the Indian students who are part of the U.S. STEM education system are playing a key role in the transfer of technology. Arguably, the CEOs of major U.S. companies are of Indian origin, and they have a very soft corner for India in general and the Indian market in particular. Due to this, India is achieving new heights in high-tech sectors in the region. Currently, India has five silicon cities, and the big franchises or FAANG companies in the U.S., such as Apple, Google, and Microsoft, are interested in opening their headquarters in India. To further strengthen this diaspora, the Indian government signed some new pacts with the U.S. during Modi's visit in 2024.¹⁶

The Department of State will, however, launch a pilot program this year to determine domestic renewals of certain petition-based temporary work visas, including for Indian nationals, who will no longer be required to leave the country to renew in eligible categories, according to Modi's recent visit to the U.S. It will be implemented for an expanded pool of H1B and L visa

¹⁶ Bose and Zengerle, "Biden, Modi Hail New Era for US-India Ties and Tout Deals | Reuters."

holders in 2024, with the aim of widening the program to include other eligible visa categories. Following that, the United States will open new consulates in cities where embassies and consulates were not previously present, such as Bengaluru and Ahmedabad. On the other hand, India looks forward to opening its consulate in Seattle later this year and announcing two new consulates in the United States.¹⁷ These new developments will further enhance the Indian lobby in the United States, and they may have negative implications for both Pakistan and China.

India-U.S. Strategic Convergence in the Indo-Pacific

In an effort to contain the rise of China, the United States is seeking stronger ties on the global stage with India. Therefore, the United States supports India as an emerging leading global power in the current international order and as an important partner in Asia and the Indo-Pacific.¹⁸ The two countries cooperate closely in international forums and multilateral organizations, including the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, G20 summits, the World Trade Organization, and others.

In addition, President Biden and Indian Prime Minister Modi have met several times at different forums, where they focused on enhancing their cooperation and strengthening their relationship in various areas.

Furthermore, to deepen their collaboration and bolster their presence in the Indo-Pacific, during Modi's recent visit to the U.S., the two largest democracies in the world signed several agreements related to cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

The first agreement is that the United States will join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), a regional initiative inaugurated by Indian Prime Minister Modi in 2015, aimed at promoting a safe, secure, and stable maritime domain, and encouraging its conservation and sustainable use.

The second agreement states that the Indian government will maintain its observer status in the Partners in the Blue Pacific. The U.S. government, along with its regional allies, Australia,

¹⁷ *The Economic Times*, "White House: US Intends to Open Consulates in Bengaluru, Ahmedabad: White House," accessed February 21, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/latest-updates/us-intends-to-open-consulates-in-bengaluru-ahmedabad-and-india-in-seattle-white-house/articleshow/101188746.cms?from=mdr>.

¹⁸ Brian Osgood, "What's behind Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's US Visit?" *Al Jazeera*, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/21/whats-behind-indian-prime-minister-narendra-modis-us-visit>

Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, launched this initiative in response to China's aggressive push to expand its influence. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure "effective and efficient cooperation with small island nations in the region."

Additionally, officials from the United States and India will hold a Dialogue on the Indian Ocean with experts and stakeholders from across the region to promote better regional coordination.¹⁹

Implications of US-India agreements for Pakistan and China

Encirclement and Counter-Encirclement in the Indian Ocean

The current state of affairs in the Indian Ocean and the ongoing escalation of hostilities between rising powers over the protection of their respective interests will open the door for the use of ports under the influence of the United States and India for military objectives. This will enable nations to protect their maritime routes from threats emanating from their adversaries and keep tabs on their movements. As previously stated, the United States and India signed the LEMOA to allow both nations to utilize each other's seaports for a variety of purposes, such as refuelling logistical supplies, and services.

For the same reason, countries today maintain their own military ports abroad. The situation in the Indian Ocean escalates as tensions build between China and India and between the United States and China, as all of them are actively working to expand their influence there. Consequently, countries compete with one another's policies and seek deep seaports in the Indian Ocean. In pursuit of this goal, the U.S. maintains 587 ports across the globe, including two significant ones in the Indian Ocean basin: Diego Garcia and the military base in Djibouti.²⁰

By establishing a military station in Djibouti, the U.S. strengthened its influence in the Indian Ocean region, especially in Bab al-Mandeb, which is a trade route that enters the Red Sea and leads to the Mediterranean Sea, Europe, and America.²¹ This is the fastest sea route from Asia

¹⁹ Briefing Room, "FACT SHEET: Republic of India Official State Visit to the United States," *The White House Briefing Room*, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/06/22/fact-sheet-republic-of-india-official-state-visit-to-the-united-states/>.

²⁰ Geraldine Knatz and Katherine Chambers, "Seaports," in *Women in Infrastructure*, 241–261 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022).

²¹ Degang Sun and Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Eagle's Nest in the Horn of Africa: US Military Strategic Deployment in Djibouti," *Africa Spectrum* 51, no. 1 (2016): 111–124.

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to Europe and America, bypassing the continent of Africa and having a noticeable effect on commodity prices. Furthermore, Djibouti made history by being the first state along the Indian Ocean coast to formally host a foreign military base.

Interestingly, before relocating to Djibouti, which became the first developing country to host an American post, the U.S. had bases mostly in developed countries like Germany, Japan, and South Korea. Initially, the objective of having a base in Djibouti was to defend trade in the Horn of Africa against pirate attacks and to mitigate the harm that non-traditional security risks like tsunamis could bring. The states that were affected by the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean region were devastated, and many people died. The United States did everything in its power to reach the impacted territories and save their people from harm, with the assistance of its allies.

Furthermore, the history of the recently revived Quad dates back to the period when the United States, Australia, Japan, and India worked together to help their respective countries recover from this terrible incident. At that point, the alliance between the four countries began to transform into a military alliance, mainly to counter China's ascent in the Indo-Pacific.

Considering the strategic importance of the American military base in Djibouti, the United States has the capability to launch military operations from this port against its adversaries in order to preserve its interests and those of its allies. It will also be used to counter China's growing influence in the region by monitoring the timing of Chinese shipments and securing the interests of both the United States and its allies.

That being said, India is allowed to use this port in Djibouti for shipping, refuelling, and other purposes in compliance with the stipulations of the LEMOA.²² The forces of both the United States and India can utilize this port to monitor Chinese ship movements and defend their naval lines of communication in the Indian Ocean region because of their shared interests in countering China. Similarly, India can strengthen its position in the area, especially in the Indian Ocean, by upholding the LEMOA. Diego Garcia, located in the centre of the Indian Ocean, is home to the United States' second most important military installation.

²² Maheen Butt and Qudsia Akram, "Sino-Indian Port Politics in the Indian Ocean Region," *Journal of Nautical Eye and Strategic Studies* 4, no. 1 (2024): 187–216.

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Under LEMOA, India can utilize the U.S. military port, Diego Garcia's pivotal location in the western Indian Ocean, to counter China's purported encirclement of the nation, which is based on the widely accepted String of Pearls theory propagated by the West. The String of Pearls theory holds that China is constantly striving to seize control of and exert influence over the ports in the littoral states of the Indian Ocean, such as the ports of Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Chittagong (Bangladesh), and Kyaukpyu (Myanmar), thereby continuously encircling India. India sees this encirclement as a security threat to its interests in the Indian Ocean. India has countered this by orchestrating its own strategy, the Necklace of Diamonds, to increase its power in the area by seeking littoral states to host ports. Diego Garcia thus gives India the backing it needs to stand up to China in the Indian Ocean.²³

Moreover, the Indian Necklace of Diamonds strategy not only aims to encircle China but also Pakistan. As per this unofficial strategy, India enhances its naval capability and builds its own network of ports to counter the so-called String of Pearls strategy. India has access to the Duqm port in Oman, the Chabahar port in Iran, and bases in Tajikistan and Mongolia. Hypothetically speaking, India could wage war from multiple fronts against Pakistan. This gives credence to the fact that India's growing influence in the region has severe security and military implications for Pakistan.

Cybersecurity and Strategic Alignment

As previously discussed, this agreement has enabled India and the United States to collaborate more closely in countering China's rise in the Indian Ocean. According to certain reports, some Chinese hackers have the capability to infiltrate communications.²⁴ This agreement safeguards internal military communications, as well as communications between the U.S. and India in the region. Whenever anti-Chinese sentiment fuels tensions in the Indian Ocean, the U.S. and India intensify their engagement and prepare to confront any potential threat posed by China. Both nations believe it is in their mutual interest to work together against common adversaries in the region, particularly China.

²³ Darshana M. Baruah and Yogesh Joshi, "India's Policy on Diego Garcia and Its Quest for Security in the Indian Ocean," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 75, no. 1 (2021): 36–59.

²⁴ William IV Howlett, *The Rise of China's Hacking Culture: Defining Chinese Hackers* (Master's thesis, California State University, San Bernardino, 2016), Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations 383, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/383>.

This agreement will also compel India and the United States to deepen their cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. India plans to increase its procurement of American-made drones, helicopters, and other defence-related hardware to bolster its security.²⁵ Additionally, the U.S. will support the Indian government by providing data under the COMCASA agreement, which is widely regarded as safe, secure, and extremely difficult to breach. Through its satellite navigation system, the U.S. can monitor the activities of other nations in the region, particularly those hostile to the U.S. and its allies. As a result, the U.S. and other like-minded countries can securely share intelligence with India and other partners regarding regional developments.

Satellite Surveillance and Regional Power Shifts

The BECA agreement paved the way for deeper collaboration between the United States and India, as both countries compete with China in India's strategic backyard, the Indian Ocean. India is concerned about China's expansionist policies, as China seeks to increase its influence in the region under the guise of offering development opportunities to littoral states. Through this partnership, India gains access to advanced satellite and U.S. navigation systems to track Chinese shipments in real time.²⁶

A practical example of satellite information sharing under BECA was seen during the recent Galwan Valley clash between China and India across the Line of Actual Control. Under the BECA agreement, the U.S. provided intelligence on Chinese troop movements to India. Arguably, this assistance enabled India to strategically position itself against China. During the clashes, over thirty Indian troops were killed and numerous others were injured in a direct confrontation between the People's Liberation Army of China and the Indian Army. China, however, acknowledged the loss of only four soldiers. As a countermeasure, the Chinese military began constructing villages on their side of the border to serve as a civilian warning system in case the Indian Army penetrated Chinese-claimed territory. These build-up activities were monitored and intercepted by both Indian and American forces. Additionally, the U.S. supported the Indian Army by disclosing the positions of Chinese troops and potential attack aircraft.

²⁵ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "The COMCASA Question in India-US Military Relations," *Observer Research Foundation*, 2018, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/43831-comcasa-question-us-india-military-relations>.

²⁶ Ibid.

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Similarly, the U.S. monitors Chinese movements through its vast network of over 4,000 satellites and responds using both soft and hard power in the region. In the same vein, data sharing with India can assist it in using intelligence to avert potential threats from China and its allies, especially Pakistan. It is also worth noting that the United States, with over 4,000 satellites, leads global space surveillance and military satellite technology. China, in comparison, operates approximately 500 satellites, while India, currently with fewer, has pledged to launch more than 100 satellites in the near future.²⁷

These developments underscore the U.S. effort to consolidate its influence in the region. Likewise, the U.S. has chosen India as a strategic ally to counterbalance China's growing dominance. The United States initially established its presence in the Asia-Pacific region through defence agreements with Japan and the Philippines, which effectively curbed China's regional influence. Additionally, China was confronted with the "Malacca Dilemma" when the United States deployed thousands of troops near the Strait of Malacca. Given that China is the world's largest importer of crude oil, and much of its trade flows through the Strait of Malacca via naval and commercial vessels, this strategic choke point remains a serious concern for Beijing.

Furthermore, BECA has created a security dilemma for Pakistan. Prior to the development of China's BeiDou GPS system, Pakistan relied on the U.S.-based GPS system for its military operations. Under BECA, the U.S. is obligated to share satellite data with India. As a result, it is possible that the U.S. could share information on Pakistani troop and equipment positioning with India. Given the deep-seated hostility between these two South Asian rivals, this could place Pakistan at a significant disadvantage during wartime. To mitigate this risk, Pakistan has opted to adopt China's BeiDou navigation system (BDS).²⁸

High-Tech Alliance and Its Regional Implications

Cooperation in technology between the U.S. and India could have significant economic, societal, geopolitical, and security implications for Pakistan. Economically, Pakistan might face increased competition and a widening innovation gap, potentially diverting foreign investment

²⁷ K. Alan Kronstadt and Sonia Pinto, *India-US Security Relations: Current Engagement*, vol. 42823 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012).

²⁸ Omer Mohsin Mubarak and Andrew G. Dempster, "Beidou: A GPS Alternative for Pakistan's Naval Vessels," in *Proceedings of the 2013 10th International Bhurban Conference on Applied Sciences & Technology (IBCAST)*, 302-307 (IEEE, 2013).

from Pakistan to India and slowing Pakistan's economic growth. At the societal level, this could exacerbate the digital divide between the populations of the two countries. Militarily, advancements in technology through U.S.-India cooperation could enable India to acquire more advanced military capabilities, strengthen its cybersecurity infrastructure, and expand and enhance its surveillance systems.²⁹

The U.S. has already imposed harsh sanctions on China to limit its access to semiconductors used in high-tech equipment, which are crucial for the development of supercomputing, AI, and other high-tech industries. Additionally, the United States aims to diversify its supply chains and reduce dependence on the People's Republic of China. To this end, the U.S.-based company Micron Technology, Inc., with support from India's Semiconductor Mission, will invest in a semiconductor assembly and testing facility in India. The company plans to establish this assembly and testing unit in the state of Gujarat.

Given the adversarial relationship between the U.S. and China, such initiatives are likely to enhance India's technological and manufacturing capabilities in the region. Therefore, if India and the U.S. continue to collaborate in the high-tech sector, these developments will carry significant strategic implications for China.³⁰

Diaspora Power and Strategic Influence

The pacts signed in 2023 between India and the U.S. will further enhance the role of the Indian diaspora in shaping U.S. policies toward Pakistan through lobbying and other tactics. This will make it increasingly difficult for Pakistan to defend its case in the U.S. and on various international forums.³¹

The two states have launched a new joint task force involving the Association of American Universities and leading Indian educational institutions, including the renowned Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). These developments are expected to further increase the number of Indian students in prominent U.S. institutions, who will play a key role in the transfer of technology and

²⁹ Javairah Kultum Aatif, "What Does US-India Tech Coupling Mean for Pakistan?," *The Express Tribune*, accessed June 28, 2024, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2403053/what-does-us-india-tech-coupling-mean-for-pakistan>.

³⁰ Sujai Shivakumar, Charles Wessner, and Thomas Howell, *A Seismic Shift: The New U.S. Semiconductor Export Controls and the Implications for U.S. Firms, Allies, and the Innovation Ecosystem* (2022).

³¹ *Atlantic Council*, "The U.S. Needs a New Paradigm for Data Governance," accessed June 28, 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-us-needs-a-new-paradigm-for-india-great-power-partnership/>.

in globally representing Indian culture. As tools of soft and diplomatic power, these exchanges will enhance India's global soft power, potentially at the expense of Pakistan's interests in the U.S.

The growing Indian diaspora in the U.S. also has significant implications for China. The increasing influence of the Indian community is strengthening U.S.-India relations and shaping U.S. policies in India's favor, giving India a strategic advantage over China. Members of the Indian community in the U.S. are playing a central role in technology and politics, and in boosting collaboration between India and the U.S. in fields such as defense and high technology, areas where China remains a strong competitor.³²

Scholarships and exchange programs for Indian students will further promote research in technology and innovation. For example, the launch of a new joint task force involving the Association of American Universities and IITs will help India gain a competitive edge in advanced technologies, an arena where China is also vying for dominance.³³

Leveraging Multilateral Platforms against Pakistan and China

Furthermore, enhancing diplomatic cooperation on the global stage and within international organizations will provide India leverage over Pakistan at the United Nations, the UN Security Council, and similar bodies. In addition, it will help the U.S. secure its interests in the Indo-Pacific and the Blue Pacific, where it has signed new pacts with regional and indigenous countries. For India, these developments will strengthen its standing in international organizations and in the Indo-Pacific, giving it an advantage over Pakistan in global institutions and regional dynamics.³⁴

The growing strategic cooperation between India and the U.S. on the global stage has significant implications for China, particularly in the realm of international diplomacy. Strong ties between the two democracies can enhance India's position in the Indo-Pacific region, where both

³² Akhilesh Pillalamarri, "Indian American Diaspora and Politics in India and the US," *The Diplomat*, 2024, accessed June 28, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/04/indian-american-diaspora-and-politics-in-india-and-the-us/>.

³³ Jacob Czarnecki, "How the U.S. Benefits from International Student Exchange," 2021, accessed June 28, 2024, <https://www.niskanencenter.org/how-the-u-s-benefits-from-international-student-exchange/>.

³⁴ Musavir Hameed, Saeeda Batool, Muhammad Ibrar Aslam, and Zain Ali. 2021. "Pak-US Relations under Trump Administration". *ASIAN Journal of International Peace & Security (AJIPS)* 5 (2):300 - 309. <http://www.ajips-org.fairlps.org/index.php/ajips/article/view/2021-vol-5-pak-us-relations-under-trump-administration>.

countries aim to counterbalance China's expanding influence.³⁵ To bolster their cooperation and regional foothold, several new agreements were signed during Prime Minister Modi's recent visit to the U.S.

One key agreement involves the United States joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, a regional program launched in 2015 by Prime Minister Modi to promote maritime safety, security, stability, and the sustainable use and conservation of marine resources. Another agreement reaffirms India's observer status in the 'Partners in the Blue Pacific,' a project initiated by the U.S. and its allies, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the UK, to counter China's assertive regional influence. The initiative focuses on fostering "effective and efficient cooperation with small island nations in the region."

Additionally, Indian and American representatives will conduct dialogues on the Indian Ocean, engaging experts and stakeholders from across the region to improve coordination. These developments are likely to have profound implications for China, particularly regarding its strategic posture and influence in the Indo-Pacific.³⁶

The Way Forward for Pakistan-China Strategic Cooperation

In the current geopolitical climate, it is imperative for Pakistan and China to deepen collaboration across both defense and non-defense sectors. The two countries could consider signing strategic agreements akin to LEMOA, enabling them to leverage each other's presence at key geostrategic locations. China has already extended BDS to Pakistan, facilitating a gradual shift away from U.S.-controlled GPS in critical defense applications.

On the diplomatic front, both nations should expand cooperation with countries that share similar strategic interests, thereby building a broader coalition to counterbalance opposing blocs. Pakistan, in particular, can benefit from China's growing military footprint and global partnerships to enhance its own diplomatic standing.

³⁵ Tanvi Madan, "The U.S.-India Relationship and China," in *The Second Modi-Obama Summit: Building the India-U.S. Partnership* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2015), 13–16, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-u-s-india-relationship-and-china/>.

³⁶ Briefing Room, "FACT SHEET: Republic of India Official State Visit to the United States."

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In the technological domain, China must ensure meaningful technology transfer to Pakistan to advance bilateral tech cooperation. Simultaneously, Pakistan needs to implement domestic reforms to reduce its dependence on U.S.-dominated financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and build greater economic self-reliance.

Conclusion

The United States has declared India a major defense partner in the broader Indo-Pacific region and has signed all three foundational defense agreements with India: LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA. The partnership is not merely limited to military pacts; the two countries have also signed a plethora of agreements in non-military domains. These range from collaboration in technological sectors to close cooperation in various international organizations. Furthermore, the United States has designated India as a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific, primarily to contain China's rise in the region. However, this evolving alliance has heightened security concerns for both China and Pakistan, making them increasingly vulnerable to external pressures. In light of these developments, it is imperative for China and Pakistan to adopt comprehensive and forward-looking strategies, as recommended, to safeguard their national interests and maintain regional equilibrium.