

The Impact of the India-US Growing Strategic Partnership on South Asia

By

Harsa Kakar

In October 2025, the United States and India agreed to a [10-year defense partnership](#). It is an attempt to renew defense relations between the two countries. The partnership developed from past defense collaboration agreements between the US and India that [included](#) exercises, technology exchanges, and manufacturing collaboration. While the partnership received considerable media attention, it represents evolutionary, rather than revolutionary progress.

The partnership is a result of a long-standing history of defense partnerships but does not represent a paradigm shift in defense collaborations. However, the nature of this defense collaboration continues to evolve concerning the relationship of Pakistan to the United States and India. Examining the India-US defense partnership with an eye to the history, agreement details, and overall implications is worth the effort. [Chanakya](#)'s philosophical concepts, which are discussed below, are also instructive.

History

The United States and India are not new defense partners. The current agreement is an extension of those older [agreements](#). This series of partnerships began in 2002 under the General Security of Military Information Agreement ([GSOMIA](#)), the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement ([COMCASA](#)), the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement ([BECA](#)), and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement ([LEMOA](#)).

The most recent agreement expands the areas of cooperative defense to cyber and maritime security issues. This agreement will help bring the American and Indian militaries into alignment and make their defense capabilities and strategies align more effectively.

This US-India defense partnership is one of the ways that India can move toward greater defense independence and create "[self-reliant](#)" defense industries. The goal of this effort is to encourage the development of defense systems produced domestically or developed through technology transfers from other countries and to allow India to produce and export these products globally.

The US-India partnership also anticipates India having an upgraded military, being able to project maritime power more effectively, and enhancing its ability to deter aggression. The improvements in India's military capabilities and its nuclear posture align with India's pursuit of strategic autonomy; however, India's evolving security environment is beginning to mirror the American security environment.

The partnership between the US and India will also help to reinforce the Quad framework (US, Japan, Australia, and India) as a key element of American Indo-Pacific Strategy, creating a free, open, and rules-based regional order. It is also anticipated that increased defense cooperation between the US and India will provide an enhanced collective deterrent against Chinese assertiveness and will enable the US and India to conduct more frequent and extensive joint naval and air exercises, such as the Malabar exercise.

Similar to other forms of strategic wisdom that are based upon the doctrines of Chanakya, the US-India defense agreement appears to reflect the concepts of not engaging directly with an



adversary, depleting an adversary's resources, and winning when the circumstances are appropriate. As such, it appears that India is employing a similar approach (building partnerships, establishing a defense industrial base, attaining strategic independence, and then waiting until the opportunity presents itself to engage) with similar replenishment concepts (economic and diplomatic) that were outlined in Chanakya's playbook to allow India to capitalize on a potential weakening of the enemy due to internal politics.

While this agreement does provide a framework for cooperation and addresses some of the regional security concerns, including India's negative view of China as an aggressive actor in the Indo-Pacific, the agreement does not establish a legally binding security arrangement, like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Rather, the agreement reflects an increasing level of strategic convergence and represents a cooperative structure for defense. Media coverage of the agreement frequently exaggerates the significance of the agreement, while downplaying the fact that defense relationships between the US and India are not new and have little impact on the strategic balance between India and Pakistan.

While some in Pakistan see this latest agreement as a threat, the best option for Pakistan is to employ diplomacy, act in good faith to prevent future terror attacks in Indian territory, and avoid escalating tensions due to a false perception of encirclement. Positive dialogue with India and other regional actors will decrease the chance of conflict and build trust.

The US can serve as a stabilizing force to create dialogue between India and Pakistan and enhance regional cooperative mechanisms. Regional actors, such as China, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, etc., need to develop new policies to maintain an equilibrium in South Asia and not take action that exacerbates existing regional tensions.

The latest US-India agreement serves as a foundation for increased cooperation and may benefit regional stability and the overall security of the Indo-Pacific region. The degree to which this defense agreement has the ability to positively contribute to the strategic stability of South Asia depends on successful implementation of its provisions and the degree to which the United States and India can work with other regional states to address emerging challenges.

Harsa Kakar is as an Assistant Research Fellow at Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN), Quetta. The views expressed are personal. She can be reached at Kakarhsa01@gmail.com.