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US-India Relations in the Indo-Pacific Under the Joe Biden Administration

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Abstract

Under President Joe Biden's administration, U.S.-India relations have deepened significantly, reflecting a shared commitment to stability in the Indo-Pacific region, defense collaboration, economic growth, and addressing global challenges. Rooted in strategic alignment, the bilateral relationship has been bolstered by initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and 2+2 Ministerial Dialogues, focusing on countering China's regional assertiveness. Defense agreements, such as BECA, and joint military exercises, notably the Malabar Exercise, have enhanced India's capabilities and cemented the U.S. as a vital partner in South Asia's security architecture. Economically, the two nations have strived to resolve trade barriers, promote investments, and foster technological collaborations, particularly in sectors like artificial intelligence and semiconductor manufacturing. Beyond security and economics, the U.S. and India have collaborated on global challenges, including climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating a commitment to multilateralism. Through the U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030, both countries aim to lead in sustainable energy practices. Additionally, their joint efforts in vaccine distribution highlight their humanitarian and strategic partnership. While challenges persist in trade and policy alignment, the Biden administration's focus on India underscores the bilateral relationship's pivotal role in promoting a rules-based international order. This article examines the multifaceted dimensions of U.S.-India relations, highlighting their evolution and prospects in a complex geopolitical environment.

Key Words: U.S.-India Relations, Indo-Pacific Strategy, Quad Alliance, Defense and Security Cooperation



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Introduction

During his presidency, Joe Biden has overseen an uninterrupted growth and transformation in the relationship of the United States of America with India (Parachini, et al., 2023). Both the U.S. and India are two of the world's largest democracies and global economies of consequence and have considerably deepened their engagement across defense, trade, technology and multilateral cooperation. Bilaterally, the mutual engagement between US and India has developed from the evolving geopolitical landscape which affects both countries especially in the Indo-Pacific region and bilateral engagement is viewed in outlook of maintaining stability, security, and affluence in the region. Not only are the shared visions for a free and open Indo-Pacific one of the main forces driving closer U.S. India ties, but they will also shape the operational partnership given the diffusion of power. The rising Chinese assertiveness in the region has forced both nations to improve the same. For instance, one sees this sibling collaboration in Quad, the United States, India, Japan, and Australia. The Quad is an essential forum for talking about regional security issues, improving economic durability, and maintaining maritime security (Wei, 2022). In the defense realm, there has also been joint military exercise, including the Malabar Naval Exercise that has fused defense relations between the U.S. and India further by bringing military forces of the two nations towards greater interoperability and coordination.

Other than defense, economic cooperation has been key of the bilateral relationship. India has become a major actor in the global supply chains and trade and investment between India and the U.S. have developed on a large scale. Trade disputes have been undertaken in order to ease up trade disputes and to ease barriers in order to facilitate broader market access and economic interdependence. Still, as a hallmark, Biden administration has prioritized partnerships in bitcoin mining under emerging technologies such as semiconductor manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and clean energy. The projects are meant to further enhance the technological capability of both countries and make them less dependent on external stakeholders, including China. The central pillar of U.S.-India cooperation has also become climate change. In August 2017, both nations committed at the Paris climate meeting to work together to step up climate action (Jolly & Naik, (2021)). In September 2017, the U.S. and India joined with Canada in launching the Pathways to Prosperity Partnership This effort is geared towards ramping up of renewable energy production, enhancing clean energy research as well as mobilizing climate finance for India in the furtherance of its ambitious goal of minimizing carbon emissions. The U.S. and India are among the leading nations in the world in climate action through international collaborations, and in joint monetary and policy initiatives.

The U.S. India relations have grown stronger in light of the COVID 19 pandemic. They cooperated extensively on matters of vaccine production and distribution during the crisis, as well (Saha, 2021). India's role as a global pharmaceutical hub was instrumental in providing vaccines to numerous countries, while the U.S. extended critical support in the form of medical supplies, financial aid, and vaccine donations during India's devastating second wave of infections. During the partnership this mirrored the humanitarian and strategic aspects of their bilateral relationship with a mutually reinforcing need to keep working together



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in global health security. Challenges persist, including trade disputes, regulatory bottlenecks; however, the Biden program has been determined to ingrown ties and to grow conjoint interests with India. With the geopolitical dynamics of the changing landscape the relations between the U.S. and India will be critical in shaping the future of the Indo Pacific region. This article looks into how the Biden administration will go about developing this partnership, by looking at its strategic, economic, and diplomatic trajectories.

Research Methodology

This article adopts a theoretical framework rooted in international relations theories to analyze U.S.-India relations under Joe Biden's administration. Realism informs the examination of power dynamics, particularly in countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific through strategic alignments like the Quad and military partnerships. Liberalism provides a lens to understand the cooperative endeavors in trade, climate action, and multilateral forums, emphasizing shared values of democracy and free trade. The research employs qualitative methods, relying on secondary sources, including governmental reports, academic publications, and expert analyses, to construct a comprehensive view of bilateral engagements. A timeline approach contextualizes key milestones, while comparative analysis highlights continuity and shifts in policies from previous administrations. The methodological integration of these theories allows a holistic understanding of the strategic, economic, and diplomatic trajectories shaping U.S.-India relations.

US-INDIA Relations Under Joe Biden Administration

The relation between USA and India has evolved over several years primarily in the times of Joe Biden's presidency in 2021 (Kaura, 2022). Both are leading powers in their respective regions; the U.S. remains a world super-power and, increasingly, India plays a powerful role in South Asia. In the Biden era, they have again expanded this bilateral relation based on mutual stakes and the direction for the future. The Biden's administration has come up with a different approach to strengthening the relation between US and India on the diplomatic, defense, economic and other fronts (Vijayalakshmi, Biden Administration and the Indo-Pacific Axis., 2021). The most popular and valuable line of cooperation now is the Indo-Pacific strategy, which is one of the pillars of the U.S. global vision and is focused on maintaining stability and security in the given region (Parmar, 2022). The two countries have also supported the formation of a multipolar world order based on democracy, rule of Law and liberalization of trade and the movement of factors of production. Security cooperation has therefore been seen to linchpin of the cooperation with both countries engage in military drills and foster strategic partnerships (Vijayalakshmi, 2017). Economically, Biden aimed at deepening trade and investment relations with the USA and India because India is considered as one of the key players of supply chain and technology markets. Furthermore, the countries have cooperated about analysis key and emerging global threats like climate change and covid-19 consequences. This chapter looks into the timeline of the relation of between Biden and India also how his presidency has brought about changes that define the future of the partnership in strategic partnership, defense, economic cooperation along with global challenges (Duggal, 2023).



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Strategic and Diplomatic Engagement

After Joe Biden's inauguration, the United States has maintained policy continuity with India that was set by previous presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump. Biden's administration has further strengthened this bilateral relationship by turning these areas of common interest into pillars of cooperation while paying particular attention to the Indo-Pacific region (Huynh, 2023). Brought closer by a common interest of containing China's rise in this pivotal theatre, the India-US partnership for stability has become central. Two countries regard China as a potential adversary that could endanger the stability of the region; Biden intends to contribute to further development of cooperation with India. India holds a unique geostrategic significance in South Asia by virtue of which it becomes a valuable player in the U.S.'s greater Indo-Pacific strategy (Aryal & Nair, 2024). For Biden, India is strategic player in south Asia that has increased its importance hence his administration emphasis on defense and security cooperation (White, 2021). This features cooperation in military affairs, and exercises and exchange of information as regards threats to security. These engagements have also made it clear that India will continue to be the focus of Biden's administration's strategy in the attempt to preserve a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (Wei & Zhang, The Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy and China-US strategic competition., 2021).

Quad Alliance

Quad which includes the United States, India, Japan and Australia they also known as Quad is now a significant platform through which the four countries can contribute towards increased security cooperation within the Indo-Pacific region. Since the advent of President Joe Biden, there has been a stepping-up of the Quad to seal a more coherent status from a conversational format into a collective form (Cannon & Rossiter, 2022). Originally designed at the beginning of the decade 2000 in Singapore, the Quad came together formally in 2007 in Manila with an emphasis put on security issues of the sea and cooperation (Kumar, et al., 2022). However, the initiative suffered a trickle of inactivity for almost a decade, primarily because India and Australia feared the reactions from China. The two countries were careful not to be seen as members of an association aimed at containing Beijing, which would have endangered political and commercial relations. However, the Quad was again brought back into operational existence in 2017 given the emerging international anxiety regarding China's expanding sphere of influence and military aggression in the Indo-Pacific (Pant & Saha, 2020). Since then, the Quad has emerged as more practical cooperation group, dealing with several geo-political and geo-strategic issues on areas such as cyber security, infrastructure connectivity, and encouraging the region to respect the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The importance of the Indo-Pacific region within global politics is rooted therefore in its strategic position as a vital point on global trade, energy transport and commerce. Lacunas of maritime constraints for instance the Strait of Malacca and debated spaces for instance the South China Sea play a significant role in keeping global trade continuous and the stability of the region (Aziz & Basir, 2022). China has in recent years this year asserted its dominance in the region through militarization of some islands and construction of man-made structures such as artificial islands, has triggered such concerns of sovereignty



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and freedom of navigation. However, recent China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has spread to the Indo-Pacific countries economically and politically leaving recipient countries indebted with intense political influence from Beijing. Unlike, before the emergence of the above challenges, the Quad has emerged as the strategic forum through which the member states discuss the strategies to counter China's emergence (Kulsoom, Hussain, & Shah, 2025). The Quad aims to contribute to this goal by involving creative, diplomatic, economic, and military approaches in confronting the key challenges that threaten sovereignty and stability in one of the world's most delicate regions (Bitas, 2021).

The inclusion of India as a member nation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is of equal importance from geographic and strategic perspectives since this country is located at the center of South Asia and has historically had conflictual relations with China. India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has abandoned the policy of neutrality that it used to embrace, to embrace multilateral security architecture like the Quad to fulfill its security goals and interests. This shift is in part due to India's rising recognition of the evolving international system and the new dangers provided by the emerging assertiveness from China in the region (Dutta, 2011). Living alongside China and being involved in several border disputes, including the 2020 confrontations in the Galwan Valley, India gains more influence working with like-minded partners, the U.S., Japan, and Australia (Sukhija, 2021). Quad is an important forum for India to promote interoperability on major strategic issues concerning the region and align with India's idea of a rules-based, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific which stands in stark contrast to China's assertiveness (Estrada, 2023). India has joined the American vision especially after the Narendra Modi's regime and this factor clearly illustrates that contrary to India's past shy approach on military alliance, India has now reversed its plot constituting a strategic shift based on current security design.

Strengthening Quad is one of the priorities of the President Joe Biden, who understands the group as one of the key pillars of his administration's approach to the Indo-Pacific region (Huynh, 2023). Since the beginning of his presidency, Biden invited leaders of the Quad countries to the first-ever leaders' summit held in March 2021 more highlighting how much he values the partnership. This leaders' meeting, which was attended by heads of state and government of the member-countries of the Quad – the United States, India, Japan, and Australia (Cossa & Glosserman, 2021) – addressed a gamut of subjects, including security coordination, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and such acute global threats as the coronavirus pandemic. Biden has brought Quad relationship to a larger strategic vision of his foreign policy of multilateralism, building coalitions and supporting democracy. Even though Biden positively presented Quad as union that fosters freedom of navigation, respect for international laws and sovereignty, there is no doubt that Quad is anew counter mechanism to Chinese aggressive attitude in the Indo-Pacific region. Thus, by avoiding the deliberate construction of the quad as a containment strategy but rather as an assertiveness of an active actor in building a stably safe region, promoting the liberal international order based on the fundamental principles of democracy and openness to which the United States adheres, the Biden administration will continue. However, the containment of China constitutes an obvious, albeit unstated, purpose of the Quad (Teo, 2024).



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The Quad has identified several priority areas that are of strategic interest to its member States, particularly the focus on naval security in the Indo-Pacific region. Because of the importance of these sea lines, the Quad puts focus on safeguarding important sea lanes that for world economy as well as energy security. To improve their response and protection measures the cooperating countries of the Quad which includes United States of America, India, Japan, and Australia have conducted several Militarized drills including the Malabar exercises. Both these exercises have been instrumental in enhancing the compatibility of the Quad naval forces leading to better cooperation in counter security threats in the region (Madutharanga¹, Timur, & Surjaatmadja, 2024). While Indo-Pacific today is facing greater geopolitical risks the Quad's intent focused on the maritime security overarching the mission means making the region free from influence of potential adversaries. In addition, their naval cooperation represents the member's common concern for securing freedoms of seas, including from piracy and coercion, as a common concern to all the four members of Quad.

However, it must be noted that even the Quad covering four major powers of the Indo-Pacific Region has also identified infrastructure and emerging technologies that it saw as contemporary security interests and zones for competition. To offer a geopolitical counter to the BRI, the Quad partners have pledged to support high-quality infrastructure projects that are sustainable and conducive to development rather than putting debt traps to develop nations. Also, the cooperation in sectors that require future improvements has been emphasized by the Biden administration, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and cyber security (Jr., 2022). In these respective fields, the Quad aims to develop stable technology systems originating from democratic principles that can effectively resist external influence. The Quad is also reviewing the question of the further diversification of supply chains, including microchips, where the dependence on China has grown too significant. By means of these undertakings, the Quad is to contribute to the region's security and stability while spurring technological progress in the member states.

Dealing with COVID-19 pandemic highlighted quadrilateral's effectiveness not only in defense and security domain as it forms a core part of public health security as well. Earlier in 2021, the Quad kicked off one of the biggest programmers named the Quad Vaccine Partnership focusing on increasing vaccine production in India and distributing it across the Indo-Pacific region. This engagement proved two things that the Quad could work collaboratively to produce global public goods such as vaccines by harnessing the capabilities of its participating countries. India has played a particularly significant part of these developments due to its status as one of the world's main vaccine manufacturers (Kashte, Gulbake, III, & Gupta, 2021). Not only has the Quad delivered valuable health aid to countries requiring it, but it has also developed a structure for subsequent cooperation in the sphere of health safety. The move is in line with the Quad's core objective of coordinating efforts in sectors of mutual interest while the compilation of the report is a strong assertion of the fact that the Quad network can galvanize resources and mobilize the needed support in the shortest possible time to address emerging global concerns. The drift of the Quad into the health security arena also shows its versatility and its capacity to positively influence various fields other than defense cooperation.



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Quad is also a new feature in Indian diplomacy and a departure from the years of non-alignment policy. In the past, the Indian policymakers have normally adopted a policy of strategic independence and therefore have not aligned themselves with anyone in ways that provoke other bigger powers especially China. However, the rising assertiveness especially after the clashes in the Galwan Valley in the year 2020 have made India to reconsider its foreign policy. In this way, participation in the Quad has enabled India to strengthen the maritime sphere, participate even deeper in security dialogue, and strengthen its circles in the Indo-Pacific region (Kaura, 2019). The Quad has helped India get an arena to address China's rising dominance in the region and consolidate its own dominance at the same time. This participation is due to India's understanding of the role of multilateral diplomacy in the protection of its national interests. In conjunction with its participation in the Quad, India has bolstered its security and diplomats positioning and embracing a new strategic direction within the region of the Indo-Pacific.

During the Biden administration the Quad has become a much more formalized and active alliance and is now voicing itself as a major security, economic and technological actor in the Indo-Pacific region. The recent changes of scope from Quad to Quad-plus format concerns maritime security, infrastructure development, new technologies symbolize a complex or a systematic way of preserving stability while containing of or checking China's hegemonic influence. This wider remit can be seen as a deliberate approach to the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region where some sort of contest for hegemony is increasing steadily (Kaushiva & Singh, 2014). The issue of maritime security has continued to be an area of interest because protection of important sea-lanes and the exercise of navigation has been an important factor the globe economy. Further, the Quad has focused more on the development of infrastructure as an initiative to counter Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China and to support economic developmental projects without causing debts stress for the recipient countries. New technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and cybersecurity have also risen as interests that the Quad wants to build secure and democratic tech ecosystems. Such evolution only attests to the fact that the Quad is now a necessity as a framework that addresses the multilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific both in the short run and the long run.

India is even more important in the Quad as it represents both as an answer to China's dominance and as a way for India to cement its position as a leader in the region. In the past the Indian policy has been of neutralism and non-alignment, where it did not enter into profound associations with the military might. Nevertheless, the growing Chinese prowess predominantly in the Indo-Pacific region has forced India to review its position and turned Quad into a strategic forum for promotion of its security interests in the region. India is the largest democracy globally and one of the main powers of the region, is an important addition to the diplomatic muscles in the Quad that enhances the group's impact in promoting the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific (Estrada, India and order transition in the Indo-Pacific: resisting the Quad as a 'security community'. ., 2023). However, by participating in the Quad, India not only builds up its naval power but also builds up its diplomatic clout for shaping the rules of the security regime. In addition, the Quad provides India an opportunity to work with other like-minded countries in areas like technology development and supply chain



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resilience and put India in the driver seat for development of the Indo-Pacific of the future. So long as this region is a core of international politics, the Quad will continue to serve as instrumental in fulfilling the functions of regulating the relations between the U.S. and India, stabilizing the security arrangement at the regional level, which confirms this structure's importance for preventing the formation of hegemonies in the Indo-Pacific.

Strategic Dialogues and 2+2 Meetings

The '2 + 2' format of dialogue, begun in 2018 involves the United States and India, and has become a major mechanism for improving interaction between the two countries, particularly during the Biden Administration (Parpiani, 2024). This is a top-level interaction wherein the defense and the foreign ministers of the countries are involved, which also emphasize the entire-spectrum characteristic of partnership between such nations. The 2+2 dialogues in the Biden era have focused on explaining the continued importance and relevance of the military and diplomatic relations, for both states to coordinate security issues and work with regional challenges (Haenle, 2022). Given the location of India in a geopolitically sensitive location, the dialogue has been very useful in moving the two countries' cooperation to new levels in areas such as counter terrorism, cyber security, and stability in the region. South Asia which is still struggling to find new characteristics of threats has emerged as an area of concentration in this discourse and thus helped both countries to synchronize their policies. Whereas the U.S.I cooperation have the potential to address these challenges and work together towards improved regional security by strengthening this cooperation.

It identified counterterrorism as being an especially active issue in the 2+2 meetings, given that both countries have had to address terror related threats. India has seen multiple terror threats existent domestically; thus, the exchange of intelligence sharing, cooperation, and joint training and exercises are valuable for the country. Likewise, the fight against terrorism remains an important component of the US foreign policy, and the enmity of the two countries in the counter terrorism regime has made the two to be in a better position to combat global terrorism. After counterterrorism, the main threat recognized is cybersecurity. Both nations have realized that, with increasing threats and dangers of cyber-attacks and espionage, the next critical front is cyber defense. The 2+2 dialogue has empowered both the countries to improve cybersecurity in technological development, as well as to concentrate in building measures that can safeguard their sensitive infrastructures and systems (Pawlak & Barmaliou, 2017). This makes sure that with the rising cyber threat in the functioning world, both the United States and India are capable of maintaining stability and order.

The frequency of the bilateral meetings under the U.S.-India 2+2 format has emphasized the vital role of security in South Asia which remains a mutual concern between Washington and New Delhi in the light of China's growing power and aggression through its BRI and the military expansion throughout the Indo-Pacific region (Singh et al., 2018). Its location puts India in a unique place on the map and this is why it is a strategic partner for the USA in its attempt at checking China's rise. The 2+2 dialogues have led to the talks designed to strengthen security at sea, advance the principles of open connectivity, and uphold the rule of law in oceans, including the Indo-Pacific region. As a result,



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there has been multiplier military exercises for more often and more extensive, besides intelligence cooperation. Technology exchange in the defense sector between the US and India has been a valuable key towards increase of the Indian defense force to complement the partnership in the promotion of stability within the area. The Biden administration's focus on India rising power shows that the U.S regards India not only a regional ally but a key player in the world order.

The 2+2 dialogue has also offered the U.S. and India an opportunity to discuss India's position in international organization and system. The Biden administration has shown positive signals to Indian ambitions regarding its addition to more organizations including United Nations and World Trade Organization which, requires the reforms required for the dynamics of powers in global level (Mohan, 2020). This is also evident in the U.S.'s grand vision to seek India's partnership to reform multilateral organizations to make them fit for the 21st century world order. Via these debates, the US sees a WION (India) as an actor not only in maintaining SE Asia stability but also, in fashioning the world they want and therefore further deepening defense-to-diplomacy entente/Said another way, the two leave no one in doubt about their shared vision of an important power in SE Asia and in reconstituting the world order.

The U.S.-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue has become a critical venue to advance both bilateral relations, especially in the defensive and foreign policy arena, with Biden administration. These meeting has not only given a way for both nations to discuss real time security issues like increasing power of China in the Indo-Pacific but also allowed a strategy for sustaining peace in coming years (Kaura, 2019). During the dialogue the United States and India have deepened cooperation in defense, the number of joint exercises, transfers of technologies and intelligence sharing have increased, which favored a quantitative improvement of the Indian defense capacity. Chinese and U.S. perspectives on maritime security and the creation of a rules-based international order in the South China Sea, and other areas of the Indo-Pacific suggest a growing convergence of strategic interests between the two countries. The 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue has thus enshrined the centrality of India as the critical partner in sustaining peace and order in South Asia, containing threats from actors below the state level, and pointing to how both partners can make sense of the power transition in the region and the world.

Besides building defense cooperation, the 2+2 meetings have acknowledged the growing prominence of India internationally as the US has included India in the list of countries that it intends to place on the higher realm of global politics. Biden's recognition of India as a world power is not just regional, as the US wants India to get more involved in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, and World Trade Organization among others (Shah & Karki, 2024). According to the 2+2 dialogue, the countries have looked at the ways to restructure these institutions to reflect the contemporary world environment, which is congruent with the U.S.'s aim of establishing more equitable world system. Indian involvement is expected in virtually every area of global governance from economic growth to security and the U.S. sees its relationship with India as a key component of shaping the future of these institutions. The dialogue has therefore not only enhanced the bilateral relation but also placed the U.S.-India partnership in the center of global partnership to foster peace, security and stability in the world for the two countries to take the front line.



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Defense and Security Cooperation

The security cooperation has become the core of the interaction between the U.S. and India, especially considering the Biden presidency. This has been informed by mutual interest in the security of the region especially the ongoing insecurity in the Indo-Pacific area. Both countries understand the need to work towards stability in this region where China has become more aggressive in the use of force regarding navigation, sovereignty, and other issues to do with international laws governing relations on the seas. During the joint military operations, technology exchange, and frequent intelligence cooperation, bilateral cooperation in defense has been instrumental in building the Indian defense system and showing the United States' resolve to support India as a major security ally in South Asia (Singh M. B., 2017). The new Biden administration has constantly underlined the importance of this defense partnership for the broader approach it is seeking to implement towards China and for the systemic principles of regional order.

This goes a notch higher than the current security threats to embrace the future of the region and the prospects that would bring about stability (Vijayalakshmi, Biden Administration and the Indo-Pacific Axis., 2021). It is co-organized by the Indo-Pacific region with important maritime channels and economic value, and both parties are committed to maintaining its openness without being dominated by any country's force. This concern has resulted into better cooperation on matters to do with maritime security, and both Regional States have been engaged in all measures that promote freedom of navigation, fight against piracy, and cooperation on transnational security issues. The United States has recognized India as a regional power and key accompaniment as it sees the India as important partner in counter balancing China's rapidly increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region and ensuring for a peaceful and prosperous future. This defense relationship will keep on deepening and will continue to be one of the pillars of the United States and India partnership and will continue to make a major contribution towards realizing the common vision of both nations of a multipolar world order, based on rules in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Defense Agreements

In 2020, under Trump's Presidency, America and India took defense ties to another level by enforcing BECA (Ollapally & Verma, 2023). This agreement was quite a breakthrough in terms of increasing the availability of high-quality US geospatial intelligence for India, which is central for refining and increasing the efficiency of India's military force. BECA offered India classified information such as maps, satellite images, and topographical information that are vital in the precise measurement of its missile range and accuracy for the armed drones, which has long distances ranged military equipment. This intelligence exchange pact enhanced the country's security options drastically as well as the accuracy of the strikes (Lalwani & Sagerstrom, 2023). At the same time, the targets of the Indian strategy, thanks to the ability to work with data from the U.S. intelligence complex, improved the degree of accurate strikes and operational situations – including those requiring high-precision strikes. The event marked another milestone when India signed BECA that proved to promote the capacity of India's defense, which was an indicator of defense relation between the two



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countries.

Besides establishing India's military assets, the BECA regime also had a more strategic undertone to the relations of the US and India. The agreement enabled India to coordinate many defense assets in various zones where threats from both China and Pakistan continue to lurk. Increased conflicts in the South Asian region and along the India's borders clarify that the real-time information provided by BECA improved India's understanding of a situation and helped to respond adequately to threats from the outside (Banerjee, 2020). This new system of intelligence cooperation not only enhanced India's capability of defending its regions of interests but also strengthened the cooperation of the U.S. and India in a strategic partnership interest to ensure stability of regions. The deal represents general tendencies in the relations between the two countries as they try to strengthen the position in Asia facing new challenges. For similar reasons and because BECA enabled India to improve its military power meanwhile increasing its strategic independence, FMS became a key vehicle for both parties to pursue their long-term defense and security interest in South Asia.

The latest major achievement that can be put into the record of defense relations of both countries is the signing of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) which was the follow up to the previous agreements like LEMOA and COMCASA. These agreements have laid out the all-round architecture for improving the compatibility and other relations between US and Indian defense forces, thereby helping in conducting more joint exercises, defense technology transfers and exchange of real time information. Derived from LEMOA, it provided the mutual logistic (rental) service of the military facility between the two countries, whereas COMCASA facilitates the transfer between two countries of communication equipment as well as encrypted information (Ali, 2020). The most recent entrant in this series, BECA, gave India requisite geospatial intelligence which transformed its military might. By this framework, India obtained exposure to the highly developed U.S. technology and classified data thus, making easier for the two forces' defense systems and increasing the capability of both forces in performing high risk militaries more effectively. This has led to enhanced cooperation making the bi-national strategic defense partnership more stable especially at this time when both nations are experiencing increased insecurity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Utilizing BECA, India's military used high accuracies for geospatial data, which was extremely beneficial in enhancing Indian precision-guided munitions, the targeting systems and other remarkable military commodities including drones and aircraft. This level of intelligence sharing helped India to achieve the efficiency of defense system that can respond to external threats in areas where concerns from aggressors like China or Pakistan exist. BECA paved the way to improved situational awareness and high accuracy and this improved the level of strategic trust between the two nations (Salaria, 2011). This enabled not only the enhancement of Indian defense capabilities but also illustrated how strategic partnership between the U.S. and India reflects in their shared vision of the strategic direction of the world in the more significant way especially against emerging hegemonic power of China in the Indo-Pacific region. The growing defense cooperation suggests the two countries' pursuit of a favorable security architecture in Asia that is anchored on respect for international law, particularly



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the UNCLOS, and unimpeded navigation in the seas important to global commerce.

The momentum of U.S.-India defense cooperation, which began during the Trump administration, has not only been continued but has actually grown even faster under President Joe Biden. Since Biden took office, his administration has ways sought to strengthen the defense ties outlined by the BECA and otherwise expand the strategic partnership between the democracies. At the heart of this plan is India as an acknowledged strategic asset for containing China's growing clout in Asia and the Indo-Pacific in particular. The Biden administration has focused on increasing India's capability to be seen as critical in preserving stability in South Asia (Kumar A. , 2020). This has led to a greater focus on defense technology transfers, intelligence cooperation and joint bilateral and multilateral military exercises which are design to enhance India's capability for Act East Policy against probable China threat. As a result of this enhanced cooperation, the US and India further their strategic partnership to resume the great power bilateral role of the country in contending with emerging geopolitical threats in the region.

An important facet of this emerging defense cooperation has been the purchase of highly sophisticated American defense equipment by India such as modern surveillance drones, multirole fighter aircraft, and transport aircraft (Ningthoujam, 2021). These asset additions have greatly boosted India's ISR capability which is mandatory in keeping an eye on its vast borders particularly areas vulnerable to threat emanations from China and Pakistan. Both drones and aircraft of American manufacture have given India novel capabilities to monitor crucial strategic arc, including the Indian Ocean, an area of emergent rivalry. This rather sophisticated tool has bettered India's comprehensive preparedness to confront anew security challenges that may ignite territorial invasions or any other sources of instability within the region. A stable and secure Indo-Pacific environment is the primary goal of the Biden administration's provision of cutting-edge ISR capabilities to India a stable and secure Indo-Pacific environment is the overall goal of the Biden administration's provision of sophisticated ISR capabilities to India.

Since Joe Biden has become the U.S. president, the rapid and thriving cooperation between the United States and India in the sphere of defense security that began under the Trump presidency has continued to develop actively. Biden's administration has been purposely very energetic to further cement the defense infrastructure which has been jointly outlined in the agreements such as BECA and to strengthen further the strategic partnership between the two democracies. At the core of this strategy, it is pointed that India is necessary for balancing the OECD by counteracting China's growing influence in Asia and the Indo-Pacific area. The Biden administration has paid particular attention to India's military power and has seen a formidable Indian defense force as the means to sustain stability in the region (Kumar A. , 2020). This has resulted in increased emphasis on defense tech transfers, cooperation in intelligence, and first cooperative military efforts directed at enhancing India's capability to respond to security challenges – that posed by China in particular. Consequently, the United States and India have enhanced cooperation and maintained the alignment of interests between the two countries and assumed the role of stakeholders in addressing new geopolitical threats in the region.



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An important aspect of this emerging defense cooperation has been the pursuit of India's procurements of highly sophisticated US military equipment and platform namely highly advanced unmanned aerial vehicles for surveillance, fighter aircrafts and transportation aircrafts. This new age equipment's have enhanced the ISR capability of India especially for its large, reported borders with challenging security threats from its neighboring state actors like China and Pakistan (Mallik, 2008). The purchased Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and aircraft have offered India capabilities to monitor important strategic locations such as Indian Ocean, being an emergent zone of contention. India has been able to develop its overall defense equipment reliably and enhance its military capacity to counter new security threats such as territorial breaches or other insecurities in that region. Categorized under the broader strategy of the Biden administration to ready India with state-of-the-art ISR Services highlights that the United States' push to make sure that it is readying the defense capabilities of its allies to tackle the new character of regional security, in turn, contributing to the improvement of Indo-Pacific stability.

Joint Military Exercises

Considering Biden's administration, the compliance with the proclaimed strategic partnership has remained apparent, as India and the USA have expanded their defense cooperation based on combined military drills to secure the south Asian state. One such collaboration is the 'Malabar Naval Exercise' which is performed by the navies of USA, India, Japan and Australia (Panda, 2012). Given the fact that it is one of the key events within the Quad alliance, Malabar Exercise helps understand that these states have the same strategic imperatives as to the need to sustain peace in the Indo-Pacific region. Consequently, the exercise is aimed at improving the tactical cooperation and realistic combat performance of the participating navies about the new security challenges. In this case, the exercise that falls under the Quad has ensured the improvement of the defense posture since it provides an imitative of intricate naval operations including anti-submarine warfare, air defense and the surface combat, among the Quad member countries. Such a level of cooperation is a show of the countries' readiness to secure the region while appreciating the fact that issues to do with maritime security are assuming a rather central position.

The Malabar Exercise also reflects the Quad member states' resolve to protect the sovereignty, freedom of navigation, and respect for International Law of the Sea in some of the most remarked seas in the world today. As China has expands its naval capabilities and asserting its dominance in various regions of the world especially in the South China Sea the need for maneuvers like Malabar has become vital. Such muscularity is an effective counter to China's aggression and affirm the Quad's commonality in maintaining an order-based world (Ng, 2023). Indeed, the ability to put up a war-fighting mechanism that accrues complimentary military synergies not only bolsters tactical coupled and a collective defense, but also fortifies the interoperability of the Quad. In these changing dynamics, the Malabar Exercise continues to be an effective instrument for bringing together like-minded countries to reduce threats from each other that could harm the peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

It is essential, therefore, to dwell on key changes in the nature and importance of the Malabar Exercise since its first days on the regional and international stage.



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It was a biannual naval exercise between India and US and then was turned into trilateral exercise with Japan permanent member from 2015 and Australia from 2020 (Smith, 2022). This bringing into focus of the exercise is a strategic counter to the newly emerging threats that in the Indo-Pacific where the tension has risen in the South China Sea, and China's militarization throughout the region south of Vietnam. Just as the geopolitical environment in the Indo-Pacific has evolved, so has the requirement for a collective action of the free world democracies (Oertel, Small, & Studdart, 2018). Japan's inclusion and Australia's later addition meant the Quad nations understood that vigilance does not and cannot only be unilateral and bilateral but also multilateral. In the era of President Joe Biden, the Malabar Exercise has evolved and with every edition, having realistic and realistic staking, and high operational planning as part of a sophisticated multilateral naval forces training aimed at achieving greater interoperability. Such growth also underscores the exercise's purpose as the main 'proof of concept' of cooperation and cohesiveness in the Asia-Pacific region's military might.

Change in the Malabar Exercise under Biden's administration has turned it into an essential feature of enhancing tactical cooperation among the Quad nations. As pure cooperation exercises these allow the cooperating navies of the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia to perform unhindered coordinated efforts in maritime security, ASW and HA/DR drills. Complexity of these drills which include surface- air exercise and the exercises that focused on the counter-submarine exercises have highly enhanced the cohesion and response of the participating forces. The frequency and intensity of the exercises indicate the 'strategic socialization' among the Quad nations that keeping regional security is central to preserving peace in the Indo-Pacific (Kliem, 2020). Additionally, these exercise and drills also help in enforcing Quad's principle of upholding a free and open order in the Indo-Pacific region especially following increased insecurity at sea anchored on disregard of international law. Consequently, the Malabar Exercise has transformed or evolved from just being military exercises and is now more of the strategic vision of Quad's stability, security, and openness in the Indian Ocean region.

In addition to the Malabar Exercise, the Biden administration has been quite responsive to India's efforts to transform the military throughout its status as a critical power player in the Indo-pacific region. The U.S has become a significant source of high-end defense equipment for India and has cornerstone the Indian defense machinery (Gupta, 2005). In the Biden administration, the United States has reached record highs in the defense sales for India suggesting that Washington wants India well equipped. India has sourced important things like surveillance drones, better aircrafts and anti-missile equipment. These acquisitions have provided a great boost to Indian defense system and has helped it to keep an eye on its long borders and keep consolidation at the important geographical regions including Indian Ocean region at bay. The rise in the volume in these defense sales reflects the growing confidence in the US-India relationship, where New Delhi has emerged as a strategic security ally in a fast-evolving Asia where China is fast emerging as a dominant power (Singh, Pande, Saran, Joshi, & Lohman, 2018). The increasing defense cooperation reflects the convergence of the same strategic interests of both countries in responding to new threats and challenges to security on the Asian continent.



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Among the countries that promote India's evolving maritime security capabilities most actively, the U.S. has been one of the most determined ones because the region's stability directly depends on India's ability to ensure the security of the seaways in the Indian Ocean. Sea lanes in the region are important for commercial and strategic navy vessel transportation, thus their protection is of paramount importance to the two states. Defense exports and similar intelligence-sharing arrangements such as BECA have helped the U.S. arm India with the right capabilities to enhance the operational capabilities of its navy, increase its vigilance over important maritime areas, and defend against threats at short notice. Thus, the readers will find a strong navy that would be capable of safeguarding the Indian Ocean and its coastal areas seen as a foundation for regional security. According to the United States, a capable Indian navy is important for free navigation and preservation of the international law in the region of the Indian Ocean (Kaushiva & Singh, 2014). In ensuring the modernization of the Indian defense forces especially its naval forces, the U.S. cements its strategic partnership as it with India in the management of the Indian Ocean that is one of the most strategic locations in the world.

The comprehensive defense relation that has been established between the United States of America and India, reflects the security ties and is a sign of strengthening strategic partnership between the two countries. The criteria used by both countries include the fact that the Indo-Pacific is one of the areas of high geopolitical stakes where emerging new tensions and new changes in power relations require collective management. This strategic correlation has defined their military actions and growing defense collaboration, which are the parts of a wide-scope concept aimed at preserving stability in the region and excluding the escalation of the military conflicts. That is why; by deepening the defense cooperation, both the US and India have become important players to ensure security in the region from the actions of China (Lobo, 2021). The consistent cooperation on such levels as technology exchange, exchange of information, and training activities that involve the defense sector means that they can quickly and efficiently integrate into a set of security roles and missions. This has been further extended under the Biden administration which Holds defense cooperation with India as a key to aligning the vision of the free and openness of the Indo-Pacific region.

With China deepening its efforts to project power in the Indo-Pacific region, the USA and India, along with Japan and Australia, part of the Quad arrangement are not remiss in enhancing their joint military capabilities. The act of Malabar Exercise which gradually increases the level of increasing and the scale of development plays the role of the main operation coordination and as a testimony of the responsibility of maintaining regional security. Moreover, U.S. arms sales to India in Biden's presidency have also include new generation combat equipment and security technology which has given a boost to India's capability to meet new threats. Such steps outline the American interest in the stable and safe Indo-Pacific region including India in this vision (Singh, Pande, Saran, Joshi, & Lohman, 2018). Their matching level of military development and threats perception underlines the relevance of the cooperation, which is not limited to the regional security but implies the support of the rule-based liberal international system. Thus, gradually enhancing their defense relations, the USA and India aim to become the active players in defining the further security



agenda in one of the most vital and the most unstable zones in the world.

Conclusion

The U.S.-India relationship under President Biden has strengthened across strategic, economic, and multilateral dimensions, underscoring its importance in navigating contemporary global challenges. Anchored in a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, the partnership has focused on countering regional threats, particularly from China, through defense agreements and strategic alliances like the Quad. Economic cooperation, while addressing trade disputes, has expanded into technology and digital innovation, reflecting mutual aspirations for economic growth and technological leadership. Multilateral engagements, particularly on climate change and health crises, have demonstrated their global commitment to sustainability and resilience. Despite ongoing challenges, the Biden administration's proactive engagement with India has solidified its role as a critical ally in shaping a multipolar world order. This relationship not only enhances bilateral ties but also contributes to broader regional stability and global governance, reaffirming its centrality in U.S. foreign policy.

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