Journal of Liberty and International Affairs · Volume 10 · Number 3 · 2024 · eISSN 1857-9760
Published online by the Institute for Research and European Studies at www.e-jlia.com

Copyright © 2024 The author/s
This work is licensed under the CC BY 4.0 license
(*) Corresponding author
Peer review method: Double-blind
Original scientific article
DOI: https://doi.org/10.47305/JLIA24103111t
Received: 10.04.2024 • Accepted after revision: 22.12.2024 • Published: 28.12.2024
Pages: 111-130

The India-US Security and Defense Cooperation under Narendra Modi: Challenges and Assessments

Quach Thi Hue[1], Le Thi Hang Nga[2], Nguyen Thi Oanh[3*]

[1]Institute of International Relations, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Vietnam ✉ huequach85@gmail.com
[2]Institute for South Asian, West Asian and African Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam ✉ hangngadph@gmail.com
[3]Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam ✉ nguyenoanh1010@gmail.com

Abstract: *This article studied the reality of India-US security-defense cooperation during the period under Narendra Modi's leadership in India. The article employed realism, liberalism, and constructivism to analyze how India and the US strengthened their security and defense partnership. Research results found that, under N. Modi's leadership since 2014, India-US security and defense cooperation changed significantly in quantity and quality. The article concluded that security and defense became important pillars of India-US relations. It was deepened and broadened as well as became more comprehensive. India became the US's "major defense partner". Despite the solid security-defense cooperation with the US, India could not become the US's ally. On the other hand, "strategic autonomy" became a prominent feature of India's foreign policy under N. Modi.*

Keywords: *India; USA; Cooperation; Security; Defense; Narendra Modi*

INTRODUCTION

India and the US want to promote bilateral and multilateral security and defense cooperation. This is because of the convergence of strategic interests in the security and defense of the two countries. The two countries share common goals of containing China's expansion of power and protecting each country's core interests. China's power expansion has profound implications for India's internal and external security and threatens the US's position as the world's number one superpower. At the same time, the rise of China negatively affects the interests of India and the US in the Indo-Pacific region. From India's perspective, this country is committed to upholding the rules-based world order that the US supports. India also holds great potential in the arms market. The US is vital in furthering India's interests concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan. The US Navy also plays a crucial role in ensuring the security of international waters, which are extremely important to India's oil imports. Therefore, the two countries identified India-US security-defense cooperation as an important pillar that plays a vital role in promoting a stable security structure and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

The article examines India-US security-defense cooperation during Narendra Modi's tenure as Prime Minister. N. Modi's leadership significantly changed India's domestic and foreign policies, emphasizing bold, proactive, and ambitious approaches, particularly strengthening ties with the US in security and defense.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The India-US Comprehensive Global Partnership, particularly in the security and defense cooperation domain, has garnered significant attention from international strategic researchers and analysts. The literature on this subject is extensive, encompassing a range of scholarly works, including journal articles, books, research projects, and doctoral theses. These studies offer diverse perspectives on the evolution of India-US relations, focusing on the complex security dynamics between the two nations.

In her 2018 work, "India-United States Relations (1947-1991)", published by the National Political and Truth Publishing House, Le Thi Hang Nga provides a comprehensive analysis of the fluctuations in India-US relations during the Cold War. Nga asserts that for nearly 50 years, the relationship between India and the US was marked by a "precarious" nature, characterized by frequent shifts in alignment. The bilateral relationship did not evolve linearly but responded to the Cold War's changing international and regional situations. Regarding defense and security relations, Nga highlights the limited cooperation between the two countries, primarily due to their divergent strategic interests. The US, wary of straining its relationship with Pakistan, was reluctant to provide significant military support to India despite the latter's strategic importance. At the same time, the US sought to prevent India from falling under the influence of the Soviet Union. Consequently, US-India defense cooperation was restricted to a limited extent, with a brief period of cooperation during the 1962 India-China border conflict. Following this, India's growing reliance on the Soviet Union for military support, especially during the 1971 India-Pakistan war, shifted its defense alliances.

Nguyen Tran Xuan Son further analyzes post-Cold War US-India relations in his article, "The US-India Partnership: Looking Forward to Strategic Consensus", published in the Communist Journal in October 2020. Son provides an overview of the evolving US-India relations from 2000 to 2020, noting the expansion of defense and security cooperation under President Donald Trump. This period saw a broadening of collaboration, encompassing areas such as arms sales, counter-terrorism, anti-human trafficking, maritime security, and cyber security. Signing key agreements, such as the Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), further solidified the strategic defense relationship between the two nations.

Shravan Nunein's analysis, "India-US Defense and Security Cooperation: An Analysis", published in June 2016 on Jagran Joshi India's website, also highlights the growing importance of defense and security cooperation between the two countries, particularly concerning the Indo-Pacific region. Nunein underscores the shared interests of India and the US in ensuring regional stability and security, particularly in the face of rising challenges such as China's growing influence in the region.

Amit Kumar Sharma's work, "Indo-US Security and Defense Cooperation: An Imperative for India" (2020), further emphasizes the expanding scope of India-US defense and security collaboration in the post-Cold War era. Sharma argues that the partnership between the two nations has grown in both breadth and depth, becoming increasingly effective in addressing global security challenges. He suggests that India stands to benefit significantly from this cooperation by leveraging its alignment of defense and security interests with the United States to enhance its regional and global standing.

Together, these studies illustrate the evolving nature of India-US defense and security cooperation, from the Cold War period of cautious engagement to a more expansive and strategic partnership in the 21st Century. The literature reflects the broader geopolitical shifts shaping the bilateral relationship. It underscores the growing convergence of defense priorities between India and the US in a rapidly changing global security environment.

METHODOLOGY

This article employs a multi-theoretical framework, integrating realism, liberalism, and constructivism, to analyze the evolving security and defense partnership between India and the United States. The study adopts a systemic approach, which accounts for internal and external factors within the broader context of foreign policy and international relations, offering a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play.

The political and economic shifts in the Indo-Pacific region are a significant focus of this analysis, as these changes have notably shaped the defense and security relationship between India and the United States on the global stage. Through this framework, the research team aims to examine the interactions of bilateral relationships with other countries and regions, ensuring an objective and comprehensive perspective.

The authors utilize a combination of historical and social science research methods to analyze the developments in the India-US security-defense relationship. These include logic, observation, and synthesis, which help elucidate the relationship's trajectory over time. Additionally, the comparative method is applied to assess the changes in the security-defense partnership, specifically comparing the period from 2014 to 2022 with earlier years. This comparative analysis allows for a deeper understanding of key shifts in the bilateral relationship and their implications.

In line with standard practices in international relations research, policy analysis is employed to identify and clarify the motivations, key adjustments, and areas of cooperation between India and the United States in the realms of security and defense. This method considers shifts in global geopolitics and their influence on the partnership.

Finally, the research involves analyzing documents from diverse sources. To ensure the validity of this analysis, the documents are processed through a structured approach, which includes translation, compilation, and classification of materials in both English and Vietnamese. This process facilitates a thorough examination of the relevant content, enabling the authors to draw informed conclusions about the India-US security-defense relationship.

RESEARCH RESULTS

India-US Strengthen Security and Defense Cooperation

Security-defense cooperation is one of the key issues discussed and exchanged by India and the US during high-level meetings of India-US leaders and officials. In June 2015, during US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter's visit to India, he and his Indian counterpart, Mr. Manohar Parrikar, signed a 10-year extension of the Defense Cooperation Framework Agreement. Thus, the original Defense Framework Agreement was extended for another 10 years until 2025 to expand the scope of cooperation (Tung 2021, 17-22).

CC BY

The renewal of the US-India Framework Agreement on Defense provides much impetus to the bilateral relationship. This agreement, combined with the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative - DTTI (2012), makes it possible for the two countries to cooperate in the production of joint weapons and focus on joint exercises, defense trade and cooperation in naval security, and fighting against copyright violation (White 2021). Under the DTTI, the US will focus on co-production and defense technology transfer to India, such as building aircraft carriers, maritime patrol aircraft, transport aircraft, missiles, and radar. At the same time, to promote activities within the DTTI framework, the US Department of Defense established India's Quick Reaction Force and signed many crucial defense-security cooperation agreements between the two sides, such as agreements on Regional Intelligence and Services Cooperation, Maritime Security Dialogue Mechanism, Exchange and Cooperation Agreement between the Indian Ministry of Defense and the US Department of Defense.

In 2016, many security and defense activities occurred between India and the US. In May of that year, the US House of Representatives passed legislation on strengthening security-defense relations with India to increase defense trade and encourage military cooperation between the two countries. This Act also allows the US's allies in NATO to sell and transfer defensive weapons manufacturing technology to India. During the visit to the US from 6-8 June 2016, Prime Minister Modi had a bilateral meeting with US President B. Obama. Mr. Modi became the sixth Indian Prime Minister to address the US Congress, declaring that the relationship between India and the US has "surpassed the hesitations of history" (Vinay 2018, 37-38). President Obama also believed the US considers India a "main defense partner" (Tung 2021, 17-21). Accordingly, the US is to share technology with India and its closest allies or partners to give India access to technology that can be used for civilian and defense purposes. The two leaders also issued a "Joint Statement: The United States and India: Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century", stating that the bilateral relations had never been as good as they were at that point in time (Ministry of External Affairs of India 2017).

As the main defense partners, from 2016 to 2020, India and the US signed three important foundational defense and security cooperation agreements (Ganguly and Mason 2018, 9). They are:

First, the two countries signed the Logistics Exchange Agreement (LEMOA) in August 2016. Some political elements in India opposed this agreement because it may affect the country's strategic autonomy and stance of non-alignment. However, signing this logistics exchange agreement has brought India closer to its security cooperation with the US (Vinay 2018, 38). This agreement also allows the two militaries to access each other's military bases, refueling support, and sharing logistic and communication systems. LEMOA is a vital agreement to strengthen the military relationship between India and the US (Ganguly and Mason 2019, 12).

Second is the Communications Compatibility and Confidentiality Agreement (COMCASA) signed during the 2+2 Dialogue in September 2018 (Ganguly and Mason 2019, 12). The signing of COMCASA has deepened the political and security ties between the two countries, enabling India to use encrypted US communication systems and equipment. Indian and US military commanders, aircraft, and ships can communicate through networks in peacetime and wartime. This document also paved the way for the transfer of security communications equipment from the US to India for interoperability among the defense forces of the two countries (Congressional Research Service 2014, 119-129).

CC BY

Third is the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on Sharing Geospatial Information (BECA), signed in 2020, allowing the sharing of high-level military technology, geospatial maps, data topographic, maritime and aeronautical data between India and the US-Russia Geospatial-Intelligence Service. This means that, although the two countries are not formal allies, military cooperation has become a military alliance relationship. Previously, military cooperation between the two countries was mainly in arms sales. However, sharing military intelligence and logistic support has changed the quality of the US-India military relationship.

The Basic Geospatial Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), together with the Logistics Exchange Agreement (LEMOA) and the Communications Compatibility and Confidentiality Agreement (COMCASA), have formed the "foundation group" for the extensive military information sharing cooperation between the two countries (Kaura 2018, 38). The US has four "foundational agreements" it signed with defense partners. The Pentagon describes these agreements as "a common tool the US uses to advance military cooperation with partner countries" (Vietnam News Agency 2022, 2-9). Before 2014, the two countries had signed only one agreement, namely the General Agreement on Security of Military Information (GSOMIA) in 2002 (Tung 2021, 20). Between 2014 and 2020, the two countries signed three agreements, namely, LEMOA (2016), COMCASA (2018), and BECA (2020), forming a group of "foundational agreements" for the extensive cooperation in sharing military information between the two countries. Allies or partners must sign the above basic defense cooperation agreements for close defense cooperation with the US.

The importance of India and its security cooperation is also demonstrated in the US new National Security Strategy (NSS) dated December 18, 2017. Accordingly, the US identifies Russia and China as "revisionist powers" and emphasizes that India is a "leading global power" and is the US's primary defense and strategic partner in Central Asia, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean. In the Indo-Pacific Free and Open Strategy, the US considers India a "quadrilateral cooperation" partner. The US Defense Secretary James Mattis also emphasized that "the US attaches great importance to India's role in the security of the region and the world; we see the US-India relations as a natural partnership between the world's two largest democracies, based on similarities in strategic interests, shared values, and respect for rules-based international order" (US Department of Defense 2018).

At the Shangri La annual Dialogue meeting, Defense Secretary James Mattis once again affirmed that India is the "fulcrum" of security in the Indo-Pacific region. The US supports India's Act East policy, encouraging the Indian navy to play a prominent role in the Indian Ocean and reach the Horn of Africa and the Strait of Malacca (The White House, National Security Strategy 2017). In addition, in August 2018, the US Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA 2019), which emphasized the need for the US to strengthen its defense partnership with India, considering India a vital defense partner to facilitate military cooperation, information sharing, appropriate technology transfer, seek strategic initiatives for India to develop maritime security and defense capabilities; strengthen cooperation and coordination in humanitarian relief disaster relief, and conduct exercises with India in the Indo-Pacific region.

In order to further promote security and defense relations, the US and India have organized many dialogue mechanisms, of which the 2+2 Ministerial Conference was held 4 times. Various important issues were discussed during these meetings. At the inaugural 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue held in October 2018, the US and India reaffirmed that "India is a major defense partner". The US is enhancing its defense relationship with India to the level of its "closest allies" through the transfer of advanced technology and an increase in the value of defense trade.



At the second 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in Washington in December 2019, the two sides discussed various measures to promote cooperation in the defense industry and military technology. India and the US set priority projects to remove obstacles and work together more effectively in defense research and development. India and the US have signed many cooperation agreements on critical information technology transfer among defense manufacturers and joint research and development in key technologies, especially emphasizing the global strategic partnership between the two countries (White 2021).

Notably, India and the US have signed the Industrial Security Annex (ISA) and pledged to organize the Summit on ISA shortly to promote bilateral security-defense cooperation further. In October 2020, India and the US held the third 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, and the two sides agreed to strengthen and expand India-US cooperation in strategic and military fields. The two countries jointly affirmed the significance of the US-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership for the security and prosperity of the two countries and the world, committed to building a free, open, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region based on international law, which upholds the central role of ASEAN, emphasized the COC, supported the expansion of the scope and areas of cooperation of Quad; agreed to strengthen cooperation in the development of vaccines against the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the third 2+2 Dialogue, the two sides signed five cooperation agreements, including 1) a basic exchange and cooperation agreement between the Indian Ministry of Defense and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Service/Ministry of National Defense of the US; 2) an MoU on technical cooperation in earth observation and earth science between the Indian Ministry of Earth Sciences and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; 3) Agreement on exchange of customs data between the Indian Postal Service and the US Postal Service; 4) Letter of Intent on cooperation in the field of traditional medicine and cancer research; 5) renewal of the MoU between the two governments on cooperation with the Centre for Global Nuclear Energy Partnership of India (Vietnam News Agency 2022).

The fourth US-India 2+2 Dialogue was held in Washington, D.C., on April 11, 2022. At this Dialogue, the two countries signed an agreement to elevate the 2+2 Dialogue and give it the title "Space Situational Awareness". This is an agreement within the framework of significant defense initiatives to pave the way for further enhancing cooperation between the two countries (Vietnam News Agency 2022). During this Dialogue, the two sides exchanged views on various security issues in the Indian Ocean, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe. The two sides pledged to maintain close consultation on the Ukraine crisis and humanitarian assistance efforts for people in Ukraine. In addition, the two sides agreed to work more closely to promote a shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region (Vietnam News Agency 2022).

An essential highlight of bilateral relations under Prime Minister Modi's leadership is the visit of former President Donald Trump to India in February 2020. During this visit, the two sides agreed on many essential issues in defense and security cooperation, such as 1) commitment to strengthen cooperation in defense and security, especially cooperation in the field of the defense industry, development and production of modern defense equipment; 2) promptly conclusion of the ongoing trade negotiations and move to the phase of comprehensive trade agreement between India and the US; 3) strengthening national security through cooperation activities against international crimes such as human trafficking, terrorism, violent extremism, drug trafficking and cybercrime; 4) commitment to continue efforts to prevent, early detect and quickly respond to an outbreak of

CC BY

epidemics (Atlantic Council 2020). During Prime Minister Modi's state visit to the US in June 2023, India and the US made security and defense a highlight of bilateral relations. The Joint Statement the two leaders signed has one part on Powering a Next Generation Defense Partnership between India and the US. It emphasizes that the US-India Major Defense Partnership has emerged as a pillar of global peace and security (The White House 2023).

The two countries have made substantial progress in building an advanced and comprehensive defense partnership through joint exercises, strengthening of defense industrial cooperation, the annual 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, and other consultative mechanisms. The two countries have maintained solid military-to-military ties and mutual logistics support and tried to streamline the implementation of foundational agreements. Maritime security cooperation has been strengthened. Dialogues in new defense domains, including space and AI, have been launched. Defense industrial cooperation is accelerated by adopting a Defense Industrial Cooperation Roadmap.

India-US Security and Defense Cooperation in Practice

Maritime Security and Defense Cooperation

India and the US have common interests while developing maritime security cooperation; therefore, in the past decade, the two countries have implemented maritime security cooperation quite effectively. Former US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called the Indo-Pacific a "strategic arena". In particular, the US and Indian navies have coordinated well in the maritime domain, anti-submarine warfare, amphibious warfare, and search and rescue" (Ganguly and Mason 2019, 50). Navy cooperation between the two countries is one of the two sides' most prominent and successful aspects of military cooperation. India has always endeavored to increase operations with the US Navy to combat piracy. The US and India have strongly criticized China's aggression in the South China Sea, strengthening cooperation with ASEAN countries to counter China's growing hegemony in the Indo-Pacific" (Balwinder 2018, 253). Since 2017, India has allowed the US's warplanes and warships to use military bases and ports, sharing intelligence with the US about the activities of Chinese ships and submarines in the Indian Ocean (Vietnam News Agency 2017).

In the Indian Ocean, India has allowed the US to use the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and its Taypu base for drone and fighter operations under the Transitional Agreement signed between the two countries. When the India-China border tension took place in the summer of 2020, and 20 Indian and 5 Chinese soldiers were killed, the US voiced its support for India. In addition, the US has provided technical means to help India monitor its borders, provide intelligence to India, and support India with some advanced surveillance equipment like drones.

Regarding bilateral and multilateral naval exercises, the two countries have participated in joint military exercises with the coordination of all military forces (Anderson and Nelson 2016, 2). The US is the country that organizes the most joint military exercises with India (Vietnam News Agency 2014). Naval exercises are held regularly to demonstrate the close military partnership between the two countries. The two countries' military forces have established a fixed military exercise mechanism. The scope and frequency of the US-India military exercises is

CC BY

increasing, and India is also accelerating its participation in the US-led Indo-Pacific military alliance system (Vietnam News Agency 2019).

Specifically, in early May 2019, India held exercises with the US, Japan, and the Philippines in the East Sea. At the end of May 2019, the Indian and US Navies held exercises focusing on anti-submarine warfare in the Andaman water. In the last six months of 2019, the US and India also held the annual Malabar joint exercise. In March 2021, the Indian and US Navies held the PASSEX naval exercise. In November 2019, India and the US also held the Tiger Triumph Exercise - the first joint exercise involving all three forces of the army, i.e., Land Force, Air Force and Navy. In the past, India had only held joint exercises of a similar scale with Russia (Vietnam News Agency 2020).

Regarding the bilateral maritime security dialogue, between 2016 and 2021, the two countries conducted annual Maritime Security Dialogues to further strengthen bilateral US-India maritime security cooperation. The dialogues are also part of the US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region. The US is pushing for a more significant role for India in the Indo-Pacific region to contain China's growing influence.

Overall, ensuring maritime security is the primary goal of India-US maritime cooperation. The two sides have common interests in the Indo-Pacific region, i.e., energy security, maintaining order and freedom at sea, peacefully resolving territorial disputes, and dealing with non-traditional maritime security challenges. The Indian and US Navies have conducted many joint exercises at sea within bilateral and multilateral frameworks to improve the combat capabilities of the two navies. Maritime security cooperation between the two countries achieved the above results thanks to the high consensus among US and India's policymakers and military officials. It can be seen that the India-US maritime security cooperation is increasing rapidly, promising new achievements in the future.

Anti-Terrorism Cooperation

This is an area of long-term cooperation between India and the US, even though the two were "strange democracies" (Kronstadt and Pinto 2012) after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the US and the terrorist attacks of November 26 in Mumbai (India), the two countries desired to cooperate to fight terrorism on a world scale. Thus, the two countries signed the counter-terrorism initiative in 2010, during the then President B. Obama's visit to India in 2010 he declared India to be an "equal partner" in the fight against global terrorism (Balwinder 2018, 252). Since then, India and the US have often held anti-terrorism dialogues and counter-terrorism exercises. The intelligence agencies of India and the US have cooperated and discussed terrorist threats in the South Asian region. At the end of 2014, during the meeting between President B. Obama and Prime Minister N. Modi, the two sides, determined that the common threat to the two countries and the world community is international terrorism. Thus, the two countries must take new devices and creative methods to combat terrorism (The US-India Business Council 2015).

In 2017, during a meeting between President D. Trump and Prime Minister N. Modi, the two leaders discussed fighting against terrorism. The joint statement signed by both sides mentioned counter-terrorism in Pakistan's terrorist attacks in Mumbai and Pathankot. The statement was a tacit accusation that it was Pakistan who was behind the terrorists who caused riots and opposition to the government in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley (Mao 2017, 5).

CC BY

The US also approved the N. Modi administration's plan to create an international terrorist organization. The two sides pledged to share information, strengthen intelligence cooperation, prevent Pakistan-based terrorist activities against India, and prevent the expansion of the Islamic State in South Asia.

Since launching the war on terror in Afghanistan, the US has provided economic and military aid worth billions of dollars to Pakistan. However, D. Trump believed that Pakistan failed to wipe out the extremist group within the country. On the contrary, Pakistan maintained "close relations" with Pakistani extremist organizations. In 2020, at the meeting of the US-India Counter-Terrorism Working Group, the two sides demanded that Pakistan bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai and Pathankot attacks to justice. The US appreciated the support of the people and government of India in the fight against terrorism and other steps to prevent the mobility of international terrorists (Joint Statement on US-India Counter Terrorism Joint Working Group and Designations Dialogue, the US Embassy in India 2020). In addition, during the period 2014-2022, the US and India regularly conducted the annual Yudh Abhyas counter-terrorism drills, which focused on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in mountainous areas; conduct counter-terrorism drills (CT-TTX), to assess response to emerging terrorist threats.

During the period under Narendra Modi's administration, India-US counter-terrorism cooperation has produced various results. The US increasingly attaches importance to India's cooperation, and the Indian side also showed willingness to support the US in fighting terrorism. However, the two countries continue to have disagreements over how things went. The Indian side once condemned the US for selling aircraft to India and Pakistan at the same time. The US's refusal to recognize the anti-terrorist activities carried out by India has also upset India. In addition, the US recognized Pakistan as a critical ally outside of NATO right after it had discussions with India, which were considered a breach of trust(Vietnam News Agency 2016).

Defense Trade

Under Narendra Modi, defense trade or arms sales are considered an essential part of security-defense cooperation, contributing to the consolidation of the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership between India and the US This is a landmark change as India relied too heavily on defense procurement from Russia. Recently, India has started buying more high-tech defense products from US suppliers.

India's arms sales from the US experienced a steady growth in value during the period under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. India-US defense trade increased significantly between 2014-2021, reaching about 15 billion USD (Levesques 2020) (an average increase of 2 billion USD annually). During 2016-2020, the US was India's fourth largest arms supplier (accounting for 7% of India's arms imports) (Wezeman, Kuimova, and Wezeman 2021, 6-15) after Russia, Israel, and France. The reasons for this growth include the US recognition of India as a "key defense partner" in 2016 and the signing of three defense cooperation agreements from 2016 to 2019, namely, LEMOA (August 2016), COMCASA (September 2018), and BECA (October 2020). This facilitated the institutional framework for India to approve the purchase of additional US military equipment (Kaura 2021, 38).

CC BY

India's main defense items from the US include airfighter, transport, and anti-submarine aircraft. In 2015, the US sold India 22 AH-64E Apache helicopters and 15 Boeing CH-47F Chinook heavy transport helicopters worth 3 billion USD. In 2016, the US sold India 4 Boeing P-8I Neptune anti-submarine warfare fighters worth 1 billion USD. In 2017, India purchased 145 M777A2 Howitzers canons worth 542,1 million USD from BAE Land Systems and Armaments. In 2018, India bought Boeing's C-17A Globemaster III heavy transport aircraft worth 262 million USD from the US. During the visit of US President D. Trump to India in February 2020, the US sold India 24 MH-60R Seahawk submarine helicopters worth nearly 3 billion USD from Sikorsky. At the end of 2020, the US sold India 6 AH-64E Apache helicopters worth 930 million USD from Boeing (Schmitt 2020).

The growing defense trade is a sign of India-US security and defense cooperation. Before 2014, arms trade between India and the US increased slowly from 5,6 million USD at the beginning of 2003 to 64 million USD in 2005. It reached 8,5 billion USD in 2013 (an increase of nearly 8,5 billion USD in 10 years, an average increase of more than 800 million USD per year) (Tung 2021, 21). During 2014-2021, arms trade between India and the US increased rapidly by about 15 billion USD in seven years (Levesques 2020).

Increasing military trade has significantly strengthened the India-US comprehensive global strategic partnership. However, differences and tensions persist between the two nations due to India's enduring partnership with Russia. India has no intention of ending its arms trade relationship with Russia, as evidenced by the agreement to purchase Russia's S-400 Triumf long-range air defense system, valued at over $5.4 billion, despite objections from the United States. This incident shows that India and the US continue to have different interests, and alternative solutions are needed to make this relationship work (Burns 2014).

Weapon Production

Both India and the US attach importance to bilateral cooperation in weapon production. The progress made in arms research cooperation between India and the US is remarkable. The US has made policy adjustments and given certain concessions, such as changing the US's export control regulations and licensing procedures to open up more opportunities for joint research and production and developing weapon production projects with India.

In 2015, during President Barack Obama's visit to India, the United States announced four defense production cooperation projects with India. These included the development of next-generation Raven unmanned aerial vehicles and equipment designed to counter chemical and biological weapons (Seema 2015). Since then, the India-US defense-security relations have made rapid progress. India's need for cooperation with the US became more pronounced, even though India has been trying to be self-reliant in the defense industry to "localize weapons". This goal of localizing weapons is still out of reach for developing countries like India due to capital and technology constraints (Anderson and Nelson 2016, 1).

In September 2017, during the visit of Defense Secretary Mattis to India, India and the US discussed the possibility of India acquiring technology to produce F-16 F-18 jet fighters (Ganguly and Mason 2019, 13). On October 9, 2018, in a significant effort to support the "Make in India" initiative, Lockheed Martin, the US defense and aerospace corporation, announced that the wings of the F-16 jet fighters will be produced in India in 2021. However, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, this project has not been realized. Maryland-based Lockheed Martin

CC BY

has signed an agreement with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) to manufacture wing parts. Accordingly, Lockheed has offered to move the entire F-16 production facility to India. The production of the F-16 wings in India strengthens the strategic partnership between Lockheed Martin and Tata Advanced Systems and, at the same time, supports the government of India's Make in India initiative (Mẫu 2014). In February 2018, the US offered India the opportunity to co-produce armored vehicles with Israel and the US. This trilateral joint venture is promising (Ganguly and Mason 2019, 39).

In 2019, Indian Defense Minister Singh and the US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper signed an Industrial Security Annex Agreement (ISA) to facilitate the transfer of defense technology between the two countries. India's Tata Corporation and Lockheed Martin, the US Boeing Company, have established a joint venture to manufacture components for planes and helicopters. The US was the first country with which India discussed an agreement to establish a joint venture to manufacture equipment for aircraft and helicopters to replace India's outdated fleet of MiG-21 supplied by Russia (India: Pact in Works for US Defense Technology Transfers 2020). However, the US still has concerns due to the lessons learned from previous joint development projects and weapons production with NATO allies. For example, the joint project of the US and Japan to produce Japan's FSX jet fighters using the US F-16 jet fighter technology is considered a "foolish giveaway" of the US technology. The project gives Japan a competitive advantage in the global commercial aerospace sector. From a strategic perspective, this project helps to bind the US-Japan alliance. However, from an economic perspective, it reduces the US's competitiveness and profits. These programs face criticism from various elements of the US administration and the American public, as they are perceived to threaten the US's military and economic preeminence (Ganguly and Mason 2019, 40).

Thus, before 2014, cooperation in arms production was a sensitive area in India-US relations, yet the two countries had overcome barriers to reach initial successes. However, the two countries need to work more to deepen defense and security relations.

Military Training Activities

During 2014-2022, India continued to participate in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program organized by the US. This program aims to increase the ability of participating countries' militaries to support joint operations with the US and regional coalition forces that contribute to political stability and increase participation in peacekeeping exercises. Specifically, the courses of this program contribute to advancing the US's goals of stability and democracy while enhancing the Indian officer corps' understanding of the US's military values and practices. Indian military officers also took courses in military law, medical training, logistics, and maintenance, and enhanced awareness and understanding of the US's policies (Leah 2014, 2). In addition, IMET provides professional military education and training to military students, enhances military professionalization and interoperability with the US's forces, provides instruction on the law of arms and human rights conflicts, provides technical and operational training, and forges a deeper understanding of the US (The US State Department 2021). The counter-terrorism fellowship programs also provide training and education in integrating inter-agency approaches to counter-terrorism. The programs, which bring together partners from different countries and organizations in the field of counter-terrorism, have enabled Indian officials to develop a more

CC BY

comprehensive system approach in dealing with terrorism and transnational security threats (Odisha Expo 2020). Other programs include the Professional Military Education Program - PME 1004, which allows the US to provide language training to the Indian police force (Leah 2014, 3).

Nuclear Energy Cooperation

After the 1998 nuclear weapon test, the US implemented a nuclear embargo against India for more than three years. It was in 2001 that the US removed this embargo. In 2008, India and the US signed an agreement on the Civil Nuclear Act, which the US Congress passed on October 8, 2008. It is the US-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Non-Proliferation Enhancement Act (Ganguly and Mason 2019, 7).

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has adopted a more pragmatic approach to its relations with the US by stepping up nuclear energy cooperation. In September 2014, at the first bilateral Summit between the Indian Prime Minister N. Modi and US President B. Obama and the two countries signed an agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy in Washington. This is part of India's strategy to strengthen its ties with the United States for energy-related purposes (Ganguly and Mason 2019, 14). In January 2015, the two countries restarted a civil nuclear cooperation program, allowing US corporations to build nuclear power plants for India. To that end, President Obama agreed to hand over supervision of India's future power plants to experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This is something that Washington has refused to accept, which has hindered the bilateral cooperation process (Vietnam News Agency 2017).

In July 2016, India's Nuclear Power Corporation and the US's Westinghouse Company collaborated on the technical design to construct six reactors of the AP1000 technology nuclear power plant supplied by Westinghouse in Kovvada, Andhra Pradesh, India. This is one of the most significant projects of its kind, fulfilling the commitment of the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement.

ASSESSMENT

Positive Results of India-US Security and Defense Cooperation under N. Modi

Firstly, the legal basis has constantly been strengthened, creating a foundation for promoting India-US defense and security cooperation. The two countries renewed and extended another 10 years for "The US-India Defense Cooperation Framework Agreement", signed in 2005. The two countries signed important documents, such as LEMOA in August 2016, COMCASA in 2018, and BECA in 2020. The signing of the three agreements, i.e., COMCASA, BECA, and LEMOA, facilitated India's access to modern US military technologies, helping it to enhance the capacity to deal with Pakistan and China along the line of actual control and, at the same time helping India to expand its expeditionary warfare capabilities, to expand its sphere of influence and compete with China; to modernize India's military forces and enhance the capabilities of its defense industry through the US's technology. The US also granted India Strategic Trade Right (STA-1) status in 2018 to create opportunities for India to have equal access to the US's high-tech products compared to other NATO countries such as Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

CC BY

Secondly, India-US defense and security cooperation under Narendra Modi has been expanded in scope. Based on the growing similarity of interests in the Indo-Pacific region, maritime security cooperation between India and the US has been vigorously promoted, which has benefited both sides. Cooperation on counter-terrorism has also been an essential dimension of bilateral cooperation during this period. The two countries showed a convergence of views on the issue of counter-terrorism in Pakistan. Arms sales or defense trade has also been very successful, reflected in the increasing trade turnover between India and the US. Bilateral cooperation in the production of arms has also seen significant progress. The two countries have also actively coordinated military training and education activities, helping the two sides learn from each other's experiences.

Thirdly, the multilateral defense and security cooperation mechanism between India and the US received new attention, and it has mainly taken place within the framework of Quad. After 2014, the US's perception of India's role in Quad in the Indo-Pacific region has changed remarkably. Launched in 2007 and disbanded for some time, Quad was revived in 2017. In recent years, Quad has been expanded to become Quad Plus. India and the US have a convergence of strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. Both countries have similar views on issues of strategic security for the region. Both sides share similar concerns over China's expansionist activities in the Indo-Pacific region. The US supports India in joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) soon.

Fourthly, India-US security and defense cooperation under Narendra Modi has seen remarkable development compared to the period before 2014. The two sides gradually overcame disagreement and dissension to build the Comprehensive Global Partners of mutual understanding and shared goals. Before 2014, military cooperation between India and the United States was primarily focused on arms sales. However, since 2014, India-US security and defense cooperation has expanded significantly, encompassing areas such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, arms sales and production, and, notably, the sharing of military intelligence and logistical support. As a result, it can be said that the India-US security and defense cooperation from 2014 onwards has undergone both qualitative and quantitative changes. Despite being a sensitive area of cooperation, security and defense relations between the two countries have increasingly strengthened, yielding numerous positive outcomes. This collaboration also holds great potential for future cooperation between India and the United States.

Shortcomings of India-US Security and Defense Cooperation under N. Modi

Firstly, specific barriers in the security-defense relation between India and the US remain inconsistent with a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership. India is uneasy with the US's emphasis on the importance of its NATO allies. For non-allied partners like India, it is supposed to be valid only in sharing the burden and expanding a definite "circle of cooperation". Moreover, India's defense trade partnership with Russia also caused rifts in India's relations with the US The way the US handled the war on terror and the US's recognition of Pakistan as a critical ally outside of NATO shortly after the US had discussions with India were considered a breach of trust. In addition, in the joint development and production of weapons with its former NATO allies, the US has faced criticism from some members of the US Administration and the

CC BY

US public on account that it may cause a threat to the US's military and economic preeminence. Thus, the US has some concerns about arms production cooperation with India.

Secondly, India and the US have different strategic expectations about their partners. While the US wants India to be able to directly play a role in containing China, India does not want to become a "pawn" for the US, and it insists on maintaining strategic autonomy in foreign policy. On the other hand, India also wants to show its independence and role as a great power. This difference causes suspicion among the US's policymakers about India and thus prevents the full implementation of the US's policy toward India. This difference had been there earlier and showed no sign of disappearance under the leadership of individuals such as Presidents D. Trump, J. Biden, and Prime Minister N. Modi (Mao 2017, 4).

Thirdly, India and the US differ in opinion on regional security issues, especially on the Russia-Ukraine crisis and issues concerning Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. India is neutral between the US and Russia, while the US wants India to express its clear position of supporting the US in the Russia-Ukraine war. However, the US is too harsh in relations with Iran, insisting India give up its good energy trade relationship with Iran. At the same time, the US is not very happy with India's relatively good economic relationship with Afghanistan. The situation is similar when India wants the US to be on its side in the issues of conflict between India and Pakistan. The United States is hesitant to fully support India on issues concerning Pakistan, as it cannot entirely detach its strategic interests from Pakistan, particularly given Pakistan's increasing alignment with China.

Fourthly, the relationship between the US, India, Japan, and Australia in Quad also leads to the risk of destabilizing the region. The fact that India became the leading defense partner of the US in 2016 and the US-India upgraded the relationship to a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership has become one of the factors causing the outbreak of the border disputes between India and China in 2017 and 2020 and between India and Pakistan in 2019. China is increasingly wary of the India-US relations and seeks to prevent India from becoming a full United Nations Security Council member. In this complicated relationship, Pakistan-India's neighbor, a close ally of the US, has also moved closer to China to counter India, raising India's concerns about war on both fronts, i.e., against China and Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Security and defense cooperation between India and the US became an essential aspect of bilateral relations during the time of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (under the G. Bush's Administration). However, during Prime Minister N. Modi's leadership, bilateral defense and security cooperation changed significantly in quality and quantity. India became a "major defense partner" of the US, and the bilateral relationship had the character of an "alliance". Many important documents and agreements were signed, which became the basis for the implementation of cooperation between the two countries in the areas that were previously considered sensitive. In practice, India-US defense and security cooperation was strengthened in depth and width in maritime security, anti-terrorism cooperation, defense trade, weapon production, military training activities, and nuclear energy cooperation. The research results showed that under the Modi government, the legal basis of India-US defense and security cooperation was strengthened by signing various cooperation agreements. In addition, India-US

CC BY

defense and security cooperation was further strengthened in a multilateral framework such as the Quad. India and the US had a convergence of strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. Thus, security and defense cooperation became a promising area of cooperation for future India-US relations. However, India-US security and defense cooperation had certain shortcomings.

India felt uneasy with the United States' emphasis on the importance of its NATO allies. Furthermore, the US expectation that India would take a direct role in containing China was not fulfilled, reflecting India's commitment to maintaining strategic autonomy in its foreign policy. This insistence on autonomy caused suspicion among US policymakers, while India's close relations with Russia further strained bilateral ties. The Russia-Ukraine war posed a new challenge, putting India-US defense and security relations to the test. This crisis underscored that, despite valuing its relationship with the US, India could not abandon its stance on strategic autonomy or turn away from traditional partners like Russia. India's position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict reaffirmed that "strategic autonomy" remains the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

CC BY

CRediT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Quach Thi Hue: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing-original draft. **Le Thi Hang Nga:** writing-review and editing, supervision, funding acquisition. **Nguyen Thi Oanh:** investigation, resources, data curation.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the article.

CC BY

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Acknowledgments:
Not applicable.

Funding:
This research is funded by the Vietnam National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (NAFOSTED) under grant number 506.01-2021.06.

Statement of Human Rights:
This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any authors.

Statement on the Welfare of Animals:
This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any authors.

Informed Consent:
Not applicable.

Disclosure statement:
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author/s.

CC BY

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Institute for Research and European Studies remains neutral concerning jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

CC BY

REFERENCES

1. Levesques, Antoine. 2020. India-US relations in the age of Modi and Trump, https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2020/03/sasia---us-india-relations-trump-and-modi, accessed on February 27, 2022.
2. Atlantic Council. 2020. Trump's India visit: Limited success and cause for concern. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/trumps-india-visit-limited-success-and-cause-for-concern/, accessed on February 27, 2022.
3. Ashlyn, Anderson, Amy, Nelson. 2016. How to Build Military Cooperation for the US Alliance - India, Journal of Foreign Affairs Vol. 6(2), pp. 1-2.
4. Balwinder Singh. 2018., "Indo-Us Strategic Relations in the 21st Century", Journal of Political Studies Vol. 25 (1), pp. 243- 253.
5. Bhasin A. S. 2009. India's Foreign Relations-2008, Geetika Publishers, New Delhi, India.
6. Chintamani Mahapatra. 2020."Indo-US Relations under the Biden Administration: Predictable Difficulties Ahead", Indian Foreign Affairs Journal Vol. 15(4), pp. 280 -285.
7. Christine, M. Leah. 2014. Policy Report US Military Assistance to India: Building Partner Capacity, pp. 2-3.
8. Congressional Research Service. 2014. India-U.S. Relations, July 19, 2021, pp. 119-129.
9. GJ. Schmitt. 2020. A Hard Look at Hard Power: Assessing the Defense Capabilities of Key US Allies and Security Partners-Second Edition.
10. India: Pact in Works for US Defense Technology Transfers. 2020. https://ipdefenseforum.com/2020/03/india-pact-in-works-for-u-s-defense-technology-transfers/, accessed on February 28, 2022.
11. Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2017. "Brief on India-U.S. Relations", https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_US_brief.pdf, accessed on January 15, 2022.
12. Jeremy Diamond. 2017. "5 things to know about Trump's national security strategy", http://edition.cnn.com/2017/12/18/politics/5-things-to-know-about-trumps-national-security-strategy/index.html, accessed on February 7, 2022.
13. Joint Statement on US - India Counter Terrorism Joint Working Group and Designations Dialogue. 2020. https://in.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-on-u-s-india-counter-terrorism-joint-working-group-and-designations-dialogue/, accessed on February 22, 2022.
14. Joshua, T. White. 2021. After the Foundational Agreements: An Agenda For US-INDIA Defense and Security Cooperation.
15. Kronstadt, K. Alan, Sonia, Pinto. 2012. India-US Security Relations: Current Engagement; CRS November 13, 2012.
16. Mao, Le The. 2014. "Đôi nét về quan hệ nước lớn kiểu mới trong cục diện chính trị thế giới hiện nay" [Some features of new-style major power relations in the current world political situation], http://tapchiqptd.vn/vi/quoc-phong-quan-su-nuoc-ngoai/doi-net-ve-quan-he-nuoc-lon-kieu-moi-trong-cuc-dien-chinh-tri-the-gioi-hien-nay/5018.html, accessed on 16/11/2020.

17. Mao, Khac Tat. 2017. "Mỹ - Ấn Độ trong bối cảnh chiến lược ẤnĐộ Dương - Thái Bình Dương" [US - India in the context of the Indo-Pacific strategy], Tạp chí Tri thức thế giới [World Knowledge Magazine], (23), pp. 1-5.
18. National Security Strategy. 2017. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf, accessed on June 2, 2022.
19. Tung, Nguyen Dac. 2021. "Hợptácquốcphòng Ấn Độ-Hoa Kỳtừnăm 1991 đếnnăm 2013" [India-US defense cooperation from 1991 to 2013], TạpchíNghiêncứuẤ n ĐộvàChâu Á [Vietnam Journal for Indian and Asian Studies], (10),17-21.
20. Nicholas Burns. 2014. "India - US relations", Journal of Foreign Affairs, September - October Vol. 4(2), 1-12.
21. Odisha Expo. 2020. India, U.S. looking at training South East Asian nations in U.N. peacekeeping, https://odishaexpo.com/india-u-s-looking-at-training-south-east-asian-nations-in-u-n-peacekeeping/, accessed on 17/3/2022.
22. Pieter, D. Wezeman, Alexandra, Kuimova and Siemon, T. Wezeman. 2021. Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2020/SIPRI, . 6-15.
23. Seema Sirohi. 2015. "India-U.S.: technology transfer tussle", https://www.gatewayhouse.in/india-u-s-technology-transfer-tussle/, accessed on February 2, 2022.
24. Sumit, Ganguly and M. Chris, Mason. 2019. "An Unnatural Partnership? The Future of U.S.-India Strategic Cooperation". Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College Press.
25. The US State Department. 2021. "U.S. Security Cooperation With India", https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-india/, accessed on March 8, 2022.
26. The US - India Business Council. 2015. "Proceedings of the Session on Indo-US Industry Cooperation in Defence Production", February 10, 2015. Bangalore, India.
27. The White House. 2023. Joint Statement from the United States and India, June 22, 2023, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/06/22/joint-statement-from-the-united-states-and-india/, accessed on 23/06/2023.
28. US Department of Defense. 2018. Mattis: U.S.-India Partnership Important for Indo-Pacific Stability, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1621598/mattis-us-india-partnership-important-for-indo-pacific-stability/, accessed on 23/06/2024.
29. Vietnam News Agency. 2014. Special Reference Report, 18/1/2014, 6-7.
30. Vietnam News Agency. 2016. Special Reference Report, 28/10/2016.
31. Vietnam News Agency. 2017. Special Reference Report, 10/9/2017.
32. Vietnam News Agency. 2019. Special Reference Report,7/12/2019, 2-9.
33. Vietnam News Agency. 2020. Special Reference Report, 28/10/2020.
34. Vietnam News Agency. 2022. "Mỹ, Ấn Độ ký thỏa thuận nâng tầm Đối thoại 2+2" [The US and India signed an agreement to upgrade the 2+2 Dialogue], http://thaibinhtv.vn/news/39/74455/my-an-do-ky-thoa-thuan-nang-tam-doi-thoai-2-2, accessed on 20/8/2022.
35. Vinay Kaura. 2018. "India-US Relations: From Distant Partners to an Alliance", Parameters 48(3)37 - 38.