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Article

Consolidating Bilateral Ties Between India and the United States: A Post-Galwan Study

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Abstract:

This paper was composed in an effort to comprehend the nature of Indo-American relations after the 2020 Galwan Clash between India and China. The paper argues that the increasing Chinese aggression left India with no choice but to respond militarily. In light of the growing asymmetry of power between India and China, which favours China, India requires foreign assistance to strengthen its defence capabilities against China. The United States is a natural choice because it has sophisticated military technology and, like India, feels threatened by China's rise. Washington's leadership views India as a natural ally against China in Asia. After the Galwan Clash, significant developments between Washington and New Delhi occurred, such as the QUAD revitalisation and the BECA agreement. However, bilateral relations are not immune to the challenges highlighted in this paper. If both nations collaborate, these obstacles can be overcome, and the potential of ties can be realised.

Keywords: Galwan Clash, China, India and the USA, QUAD, BECA

1. INTRODUCTION

The examination of the Indo-American relations in the post-Galwan conflict period is the major purpose of this research paper. The conflict in Galwan is an illustration of Chinese aggression used to alter behaviour and assert control over contested territory during the COVID-19 era (Galwan clash 'huge mistake' by China, world already fighting Covid-19: Experts, 2025). Since China was the source of COVID-19, Western nations have criticised China for its poor crisis management and lack of transparency. The Chinese leadership under Xi saw it as a chance to bolster its position in disputed areas and increase its influence by providing health assistance to developing nations. The reason for China's aggression in Galwan is unclear, although it may have been motivated by a desire to strengthen its LAC claims at a time when everyone, including India, was focused on fighting the pandemic.

The Indian leadership, which has been working with its Chinese counterparts for confidence building, was shocked by the Galwan clash and the ensuing sacrifice of Indian soldiers. Following the Galwan Crisis, India has few options, and India's confidence in China cannot be quickly recovered. India has no choice but to use military force to restrain China because it poses a clear threat to its security. India experiences resource constraints like all other nation-states, and it also needs to modernise its defence system to be able to compete with China's power. In order to enhance its capacity so that it can restrain China on its own, India seeks defence help and technical support. This is part of its hybrid policy of domestic and external balancing. India is unwilling to join any alliance or coalition that may jeopardise its strategic independence in order to obtain

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this outside help. Without making any alliance promises, it requests American aid.

The study article is broken into several pieces. The first portion examines the Galwan Clash in depth and attempts to understand its causes and effects. This essay also discusses India's alternatives for dealing with China's threat and explains the concept of internal and external balancing. A different section aims to highlight the significant strategic advancements and areas of bilateral collaboration. The paper also looks into the difficulties faced by bilateral relationships that could weaken them. Finally, solutions to the problems and suggestions for moving forward were offered.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used for this research paper is the mixed research methodology. There are different methods used for this research paper. The main methods are qualitative, and secondary data is used for it. These methods include:

- **Case study:** It helps in making an in-depth understanding of India's deteriorating ties with Beijing and growing proximity with Washington.
- **Analytical method:** This is the method needed to critically evaluate the available information and make better predictions.

3. THE CLASH OF GALWAN

The Indian authorities made a public declaration on June 16, 2020, regarding the fatalities of 20 Indian soldiers during a military confrontation with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) (Pant, 2022). China officially acknowledged the demise of its five soldiers (US says it stands with India against Chinese aggression, 2022), with the possibility of additional casualties as indicated by unofficial sources (Purayil, The Rise of China and the Question of an Indo-US Alliance: A Perspective from Indian Perspective, 2021). The confrontation occurred in the Galwan Valley of Ladakh, a region that has been a subject of dispute between the two nations. In the period following 1975, there has been a consistent presence of border tension, resulting in military standoffs between the two countries in 1987, 2013, and 2017. However, the current situation presents a notable departure from previous occurrences due to three distinct factors. First, it marks the first instance since 1975 in which a military standoff has resulted in casualties on both sides. Second, in contrast to previous confrontations that were confined to specific geographical areas, the present encounter has taken place at multiple locations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh (Laskar, 2020). Third, China has expanded its policy beyond the mere implementation of temporary patrols in the contested border regions, a practice commonly observed by both parties involved. Instead, China has resorted to employing force in order to assert its control over disputed territories (Tellis, 2020). During the global COVID-19 pandemic, China made attempts to modify the existing border status quo.

The underlying cause of the military operations by China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh remains ambiguous, yet several interpretations have been put forth. As it aims to highlight Chinese concerns about India's behaviour, the first interpretation is sympathetic to China. The recent Chinese military aggression against India can be attributed to the decision made by the Indian parliament in 2019 to revoke Article 370 of the Indian constitution (Tellis, 2020). China perceives India's actions in Ladakh as an endeavour to alter the region's dynamics and undermine China's territorial claims in the area (Kaura, 2020). Second, perspective attributes China's increasing incursions in the Himalayas to the overall escalation of Beijing's assertiveness following the coronavirus pandemic. The Chinese military's engagement in Ladakh can be viewed as a component of its broader policy of assertiveness, which is exemplified by its activities in the South China Sea, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Kewalramani, 2021). Third, China has historically evaluated India not on its intrinsic qualities but rather on the basis of India's relationships with other major global powers (Bajpai, 2021). China's policy towards India was formulated with the objective of ensuring India's neutrality and detachment from any major global power (Saran, 2022). Hence, the incursion by China in Ladakh can be attributed to the increasing strategic alignment between New Delhi and Washington in the post-Cold War era (Gokhale, 2022b). These measures are designed to create distance between India and the United States. Determining the primary catalyst for this act of aggression against India poses a challenging task. However, it can be inferred that this confrontation will significantly influence India's strategic and border policies in relation to China. The escalating border transgressions by China have brought the issue of territorial boundaries to the forefront of bilateral relations (Gokhale, 2022a), prompting a shift in India's leadership stance towards China, which is now less inclined to grant China the benefit of the doubt.

3.1. There are various impacts of Galwan clashes:

The Galwan crisis has brought about a significant shift in the strategic landscape for India, with China emerging as its primary and enduring adversary. The Chinese transgressions, as viewed from India's standpoint, have effectively dismantled the diplomatic framework that served as the foundation for border management and the bilateral relationship (Tarapore, The Crisis After Crisis: How Ladakh will shape India's Competition with China, 2021). According to India's Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar, the Galwan crisis has significantly disrupted the bilateral relationship between India and China, causing an exceptional level of strain (Jaishankar, 2021).

Consequently, the bilateral relationship has become characterised by a state of animosity and lack of trust, resulting in a decline in peacefulness and an increase in militarisation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) (Lee, 2021).

Second, India has recently altered its previous policy, which rejected the impact of border conditions on the overall relationship between the two nations. The entire bilateral

relationship is now conditioned on border stability; hence, the previous approach has been dropped. This was clarified weeks after the disengagement when External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stated that:

> *The future of our relationship… if you want to see progress, I need peace and tranquillity on the border. I can't have tension on the border. I can't have the kind of issues I had in Galwan and then say, Well, you know, let's carry on with business in the rest of our relationship. That's unreal (Dr S Jaishankar speaks on India's external management at India Today Conclave South, 2021).*

Third, it is evident that neither of the countries can evade the enduring process of militarisation along their shared border. Despite the availability of new confidence measures and instruments in the future, India, in light of its newfound lack of trust, would aim to enhance its military capabilities in the nearby areas, enabling swift mobilisation towards the Line of Actual Control (LAC) (Kaura, 2020). There are speculations that India might face such Chinese military aggressions in the future as well (Jha, 2023). India is currently seeking to sustain its substantial military presence on the border through virtual means. India used to retain one infantry division during peacetime and two divisions during times of crisis. In aggregate, approximately 40,000 to 50,000 Indian soldiers were deployed to the eastern region of Ladakh. In addition to the aforementioned troops, India's military forces were augmented by the inclusion of technologically advanced main battle tanks, self-propelled howitzers, surface-to-air missiles, and newly acquired Rafale multirole fighters (Tarapore, 2021). These responses are being prompted by the increasing presence of Chinese dual-use infrastructure along the border.

4. POTENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR INDIA TO ADDRESS THE CHINA CHALLENGE: THE BALANCE OF POWER

In a scenario where peaceful resolution of the conflict is unattainable and China possesses superior military capability in the region (Dikotter, 2022) and the third-largest firepower in the world (US has world's most powerful military, Pak in 7th place, Bhutan weakest. Is India in top 10? LIST, 2023), India is compelled to adopt a constrained strategy aimed at deterring the aggressor. A nation adopts the policy of balance of power to defend itself from another nation by balancing its power with that of the enemy. According to Mearsheimer (2014), a state facing a perceived threat has the potential to employ three specific strategies in order to implement the policy of Balance of Power. It could first utilise diplomatic channels to make it plain to the aggressor that it is dedicated to preserving the balance of power, even if it means going to war (Mearsheimer, 2014). The present communication underscores the prioritisation of confrontation over conciliation. The government establishes a Red Line and issues a stern warning to the aggressor not to cross it.

There exist two additional strategies commonly referred to as 'internal balancing' and 'external balancing'. In the context of internal balancing, a state that perceives a threat seeks to preserve the balance of power by engaging in domestic military expansion and modernisation efforts and by mobilising additional resources at home (Mearsheimer, 2014). The country aims to enhance its economic capacity in order to generate supplementary resources that can be allocated towards bolstering its military capabilities. Limitation, or the lack of additional resources in a threatened state to match the force of the aggressor, causes internal balancing to suffer. Determining a state that possesses an abundance of resources is an exceedingly challenging task.

Given the constraints of limited resources within the household, the state resorts to a strategy known as "external balancing" in order to address the situation. States facing threats have the potential to establish a defensive alliance with the aim of collectively countering the actions of a common enemy (Mearsheimer, 2014). States that are under threat attach great importance to the identification of alliance partners, as this allows for the distribution of responsibility in deterring potential aggressors. The convergence of their efforts serves to consolidate both their resources and firepower, thereby enabling them to effectively contain the aggressor. However, it is important to acknowledge that external balancing does have its limitations, as it is frequently characterised by slowness and inefficiency. The expeditious formation and effective functioning of coalitions are hindered by the inherent challenge of coordinating among their members, thereby impeding their efficiency.

5. INDIA-US RELATIONS IN THE POST-GALWAN PERIOD

In response to the power imbalance with China and capacity constraints, India has adopted a policy that incorporates internal and external balancing elements. India's current posture, similar to its historical stance, demonstrates a reluctance to join any alliance that could compromise its sovereignty in international affairs. However, in order to strengthen its capabilities vis-à-vis China, it is essential for India to seek assistance from other nations. Taking into account the common threats posed by China and the highly developed military capabilities of the United States, it is evident that India should choose the United States in this instance. In order to establish a strategic deterrent against China in the Himalayan region and the Indian Ocean (Annual Report on the Development of the Indian Ocean Region (2019), 2021), India requires the assistance of the United States and its advanced military technology.

Although the trajectory of Indo-American relations has never been stable, there have been many ups and downs. During the Cold War era, there was a notable development in divergent interests and a prevailing sense of mistrust between the two nations involved. The alteration in bilateral relations ensued following the conclusion of the Cold War, which prompted the United States to prioritise geoeconomics. Consequently, India found itself devoid of a global ally. India provided the United States with a substantial market, and reciprocally, the United States

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granted India access to diplomatic and technological advantages (Tellis, US-India Relations: The Struggle for an Enduring Partnership, 2015). The change in perspective exhibited by both nations led to the establishment of significant agreements and arrangements, such as the Indo-US civil nuclear deal of 2008 (Singh A. K., 2023) India has also garnered diplomatic support from the United States, particularly in its pursuit of permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Singh A. K., 2023). The diplomatic relations between the two nations have experienced a steady expansion following the emergence of a more assertive China under the leadership of Xi Jinping. The deepening of ties between the parties has resulted in significant outcomes, namely the establishment of several strategic agreements pertaining to the transfer of logistics and technology. Noteworthy examples include the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016, and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018. In 2016, the Trump administration conferred Major Defence Partner status on India. Both nations also laid the groundwork for a 2+2 dialogue between their respective ministers of foreign affairs and defence. It is a diplomatic summit that has been held annually since 2018.

These various advancements hold multiple implications for both nations. This development marks the end of the longstanding restriction on India's access to American defence technologies and weaponry, previously granted to nations such as Pakistan. However, India was not included in the aforementioned group, despite its status as the largest democracy in the world (Jaishankar D. , 2018). Furthermore, the acquisition of these technologies would grant India the opportunity to access advanced American technologies, which are essential for addressing the security challenges faced by India along its borders. These agreements render India eligible to acquire advanced weaponry and defence technology from the United States. Furthermore, these endeavours have significant diplomatic implications for India, as they enhance India's diplomatic standing on the international platforms. India has been included in a select group of nations that are granted exclusive privileges, limited to the United States' closest allies, such as treaty partners like Japan and alliance partners like NATO states. Despite India's non-membership in any American-led treaty or alliance, it is still accorded a warm reception within this group.

Following the Galwan conflict, the American administration expressed its support for India in the border clash with China. The United States declared its solidarity with India in response to Chinese aggression (US Says it Stands with India against Chinese Agression, 2022). The objection from the United States administration regarding Beijing's selection of a People's Liberation Army (PLA) officer as a torchbearer for the upcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing stems from concerns over the individual's involvement in the attack on Indian soldiers in the Galwan region. A report has been released by the United States Commission that highlights a sequence of confrontations between India and China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) (Tellis, 2020). The report did not provide a definitive explanation for the Indo-China clash in Galwan, but it does associate it with China's assertive conduct and India's development of strategic infrastructure on its side. The report also indicated that the Chinese aggression was unsuccessful in severing the ties between Washington and New Delhi; instead, it served to reinforce their relationship.

Prior to the Galwan Clashes, China was already a common geopolitical adversary for both India and the United States, and each country recognised that the other could assist it in this conflict with Beijing. The United States has encountered China as a geopolitical adversary, posing a challenge to its global dominance across multiple regions and domains. The American leadership recognised the significant strategic importance of India in the Indo-Pacific region due to its extensive coastline along the Indian Ocean and possession of the world's fourth-largest military (Times, 2023) In addition to its military and strategic significance, India serves as an invaluable ally to Washington due to its status as the world's most populous nation, the fifth-largest economy globally (Mint, 2023), and its substantial pool of highly educated scientists and engineers. Following the Galwan clashes, there has been a growing level of concern regarding China's strategic ambitions, which is comparable to the level of concern exhibited by American leadership. Currently, it is deemed advantageous for both nations to enhance their bilateral relations.

Following the Galwan Clashes, the United States initiated the provision of essential cold-weather equipment and intelligence pertaining to Chinese positions to India. Furthermore, it expedited the execution of prearranged deliveries of surveillance drones. There exists a prevailing sentiment among American policymakers and strategic think tanks that the potential for enhanced discourse and collaboration in the realm of defence has now emerged.

6. THE MAJOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE GALWAN CRISIS

Significant strategic developments have taken place in the bilateral relationship of the two countries.

6.1. Revitalisation of QUAD

The genesis of the QUAD can be attributed to the year 2007, when the Indian Ocean experienced a devastating tsunami, which stands as one of the most fatal calamities in the region's history, resulting in the loss of over 200,000 lives across 14 nations. The impetus of the crisis prompted nations like India, the United States, Australia, and Japan to establish a collective entity, facilitating the seamless execution of relief efforts (Pant, 2022). However, significant advancements were not achieved by the group until the year 2017, when China emerged as a formidable force in the Indo-Pacific region. The QUAD countries participated in the ASEAN summit held in the Philippines in 2017, during which they revitalised the QUAD as QUAD 2.0 (Singh, 2023). The primary objective of this initiative was to safeguard the unimpeded movement of maritime vessels in the Indo-Pacific region. Following the Galwan

clash, India, initially hesitant, was compelled to become an engaged participant in the QUAD alliance. The document titled "The Spirit of Quad" was unveiled during the 2021 summit of the QUAD. While refraining from explicitly mentioning China, it urged collective opposition to the actions undertaken by the country (Basu, 2023).

6.2. BECA

On October 27, 2020, the governments of India and the United States signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) (Roy, 2020). This agreement represents the third instalment in a series of bilateral agreements, with the primary objective of strengthening military and technical cooperation between the two nations. Two additional agreements that are worth mentioning are the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) (US Security Cooperation With India , 2020). The BECA agreement enables India to gain access to American geospatial intelligence. The proposed agreement aims to provide precise cartographic representations and satellite imagery, thereby bolstering India's capabilities in the fields of topographical and aeronautical data. These enhancements are crucial for safeguarding the nation's borders. Furthermore, the acquisition of this technology will provide India with enhanced GPS capabilities, thereby augmenting the precision of its automated systems and bolstering the effectiveness of guided weapons such as missiles and armed drones.

6.3. I2U2

The United States also aims to strengthen collaboration with India on a multilateral scale and across various geographical regions. I2U2 is a product of collaborative efforts between New Delhi and Washington in the region of West Asia, and its establishment took place during the ministerial meeting held in October 2021. The membership of this group includes the states: India, the United States, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates. This collaborative arrangement facilitates the promotion of cooperation among nations in various domains such as water management, energy production, transportation systems, space exploration, healthcare, and food security, among others.

6.4. ICET

The acronym ICET represents the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology, which serves as a collaborative effort between New Delhi and Washington. The aforementioned is a comprehensive framework that facilitates collaboration on crucial and evolving technologies. The charter is specifically formulated to enhance technology cooperation, foster the creation of novel opportunities, and capitalise on the current geopolitical landscape (Mishra, Buiding on the pillars of the India-US defence relationship in the 21st century, 2023). The aforementioned initiative was officially inaugurated in January 2023 by the National Security Advisors (NSAs) of two nations in Washington, DC (Bhandari, 2023).

6.5. Indian PM visit to US in 2023

Recent Prime Minister of India Modi's visit to the United States was his second official and historic trip to the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the leader of India, spearheaded a Yoga Day event at the United Nations headquarters in New York (P.M. Modi Performs Yoga on International Yoga Day at UN headquarters in New York, 2023), which resulted in the establishment of a Guinness World Record for the highest number of nationalities actively engaging in a single yoga session. Following the conclusion of the aforementioned session, Indian PM Modi participated in a dinner at the White House, organised by American President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden. The visit of Prime Minister Modi and the associated events exemplify the strategic importance of India within the American strategic sphere and leadership. During the visit, both nations reached significant agreements in various domains, including defence, technology, counterterrorism, and sustainable development, among others. Within the realm of defence, a collaborative effort between Indian HAL and American GE has been established to jointly manufacture F414 engines. Additionally, a Mastership Repair Agreement (MASRA) has been reached. Furthermore, India has made plans to acquire armed MQ-9B Seaguardian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in order to enhance its surveillance capabilities. Moreover, the inauguration of INDUS-X, a platform for joint innovation in defence technologies, has taken place. India is set to establish a semiconductor assembly and test facility valued at US$ 2.75 billion, with a focus on technology. Additionally, India has been included in a mineral partnership led by the United States, and there are plans for advanced training of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) astronauts by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The United States' endeavours are directed towards strengthening India's confidence and augmenting its capability to confront China. Upon careful examination of China's substantial economic and military capabilities, it becomes evident that India stands as the sole nation capable of rivalling it. The United States is actively pursuing India as a prospective regional counterbalance to China in the Asian context. A deterrent is a mechanism that dissuades a state from engaging in actions that are disapproved by others. The American leadership holds the belief that a robust and self-assured India has the potential to create strategic ambiguity for China along its southern border, thereby diverting its attention away from the Indo-Pacific region. The necessity for India to possess robust military capabilities and advanced technological prowess is imperative in order to counterbalance China's assertive and aggressive conduct (US says it stands with India against Chinese Aggression, 2022).

7. IMPERATIVES FOR INDIA

In addition to the power disparity with China, a number of other factors are pushing the Indian leadership closer to the United States. These factors range from geopolitical to defensive in nature. They should be mentioned here.

7.1. Defence

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China has emerged as a formidable threat to many nations in various regions of the globe. It is using its military strength and economic influence to get the regional balance of power altered to its advantage. For instance, the United States has been surpassed by China as the world's largest navy (Barua, 2025) and aims to dominate the Indo-Pacific region. To meet the challenge, India must enhance its defence capabilities by modernising its weapon system and maximizing the potential of its indigenous defence industry. To realise its national interests, it therefore, imports advanced weapons and defence technology from the United States. It seeks U.S. assistance to improve the capabilities of its domestic defence industry (Mishra, 2023).

7.2. Russian Dilemma

Since India's independence, Russia has been one of India's primary sources of defence. The treaty of solidarity between India and the then-Soviet Union in 1971 increased India's reliance on Russia for defence. However, in light of Russia's increasing reliance on China and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, India's defence ties with Russia are not particularly positive. In India's strategic circuit, there is a consensus that India must diversify its defence sources and reduce its reliance on Russia. Primarily, there are two reasons to reduce the defence reliance on Russia: first, Russian weapons are being used against the western weapons of Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. They are revealed to be less effective and sophisticated than Western and notably American weaponry. Moreover, the growing ties between Russia and China have become a significant source of trouble for India. Russia is the subordinate partner in this bilateral relationship because China's economy is much larger than Russia's, China has greater diplomatic influence, and Russia is highly dependent on China to avoid the effects of Western sanctions. Consequently, it is abundantly evident that China may also influence Russia's strategic decisions, such as the supply of weapons to India. In this situation, India looks to the United States, which could perform the same role as Russia.

7.3. Technology

After the Galwan conflict, the Indian government banned popular Chinese applications in India, including TikTok. The Indian government made these efforts to avoid Chinese technological dominance and penetration. After the moratorium on apps, the Indian government began to examine Chinese investments in India more closely. However, India sought to collaborate with the United States and its technology companies, such as ICET (Bhandari, 2023), as well as with American GE and Indian HAL to build jet engines jointly, and India will construct a semiconductor chip facility. India requires partners like the United States to expand its technological sectors (What US, India have agreed on: Tech and defence partnerships, initiatives on visas and education, and more, 2023). Indian corporations can become technological leaders if they collaborate with and learn from American technological corporations.

7.4. Indian Ocean

China is emerging as a significant counterpoint in the Indian Ocean, with the intent and capacity to reshape the Indo-Pacific region's power balance in its favour. Its ambitious and assertive policy in the Pacific Ocean, which includes island construction and the appropriation of strategic islands, poses a strategic threat to Washington and its regional partners. China is pursuing a 'String of Pearls' (Kumar, 2024) strategy in the Indian Ocean, where it is constructing a chain of islands such as Gwadar and Hambantota to encircle India and reduce India's strategic advantage in the Indian Ocean. India and the United States are therefore natural allies against a common foe. As previously stated, Chinese PLA naval power has surpassed U.S. naval power and poses a threat to India. India's partnership with the United States is founded on four pillars: the maintenance of peace and security, the prohibition of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the eradication of radicalism and terrorism, and the establishment of a rules-based order.

8. CHALLENGES

There are various challenges that could be traced in the progress of Indo-US ties:

8.1. US exaggerated expectations

Two strategic experts highlighted these exaggerated expectations of American leadership from their investment in a partnership with India. They are Ashley J. Tellis and Daniel Markey, who both argued that the current and previous American leadership expected services that they could not provide. These expectations pertain to India's participation in the event of a military crisis between the United States and China. According to Tellis, India will not participate in conflicts involving Taiwan, given India's relative inferiority and geographical proximity to China. India will not engage in a crisis unless it poses a threat to its national security. India only values its alliance with the United States due to the military and technological benefits it derives from the alliance (Tellis, 2023).

India and the United States have divergent security collaboration goals. It is an endeavour by the United States to incorporate India into the liberal international order so that it can effectively contribute to its preservation. However, India has no interest in maintaining a liberal international order or joining a joint defence coalition. It is only interested in acquiring American munitions and cutting-edge technology in order to bolster its ability to independently balance China (Tellis, 2023).

8.2. India's quest for strategic autonomy

The pursuit of strategic autonomy has consistently shaped India's foreign policy (Purayil, 2021). The objective of India's adoption of the non-alignment policy during the Cold War was to safeguard its strategic autonomy. The pursuit of strategic autonomy by India is deeply influenced by its historical experience of colonialism, as it seeks to safeguard against a recurrence of such subjugation. It is evident that India's commitment to strategic autonomy remains steadfast, which is expected to hinder the prospects of an Indo-US alliance.

The history of Indo-US relations has demonstrated the

failure of every attempt by the US to establish a strong alliance between the two countries based on the shared value of democracy. During the Cold War, the presidents in office during that period endeavoured to persuade India to align itself against the Soviet Union. However, India failed to meet American expectations by not opposing the Soviet Union and instead formed strong military alliances with them.

8.3. Weak economic ties

The United States has turned out to be the largest trading partner of India in 2022-23, as economic connections between the two nations have strengthened. In 2022-2023, bilateral trade increased by 7.65%, from US$ 119.5 in 2021-22 to US$ 128.5 (India to remain 5th largest economy in 2023, says RBI bulletin, The Mint, 2023). Despite these positive developments, the economic ties between the two nations have not strengthened (Rossow, 2021). If India's trade with the United States is compared to India's trade with China, the latter set is significantly larger. In 2022, bilateral trade between India and China totalled $135.98 USD, demonstrating that India's economic dependence on China is greater than its dependence on the United States (India-China trade climbs to USD 135.98 billion in 2022, trade deficit crosses USD 100 billion for the first time, 2023).

There are additional significant issues in the field of economics between India and the United States. First, there is a false claim by Americans that India has a long, uninterrupted history of trade protectionism. India has made steps to open its economy since the implementation of the LPG policy, but it seeks to protect economically vulnerable sectors such as agriculture. In addition, it is asserted that the Indian market has been relatively confined since Modi's ascension to power in 2014. Second, Indo-US bilateral trade relations favour India because the United States imports more goods from India. India's exports to the United States totalled US$ 78.31 billion out of a total bilateral trade volume of US$ 128.55 billion. The Trump administration raised US economic concerns regarding India. In March 2019, he revoked India's status as a preferential trading partner under the Generalised System of Preferences. All of these indicate that economic connections have the potential to destabilise relations.

8.4. Divergence on global affairs

In his article for Foreign Affairs magazine, Daniel S. Markey emphasised the differences between the United States and China regarding international affairs. He argued that the divergence between two countries on geopolitical issues was reflected in their UN votes on numerous issues. From 2014 to 2019, only 20% of Indian ballots mirrored those of the United States. It is significantly lower when compared to those of other countries, such as France's 57% (Markey, 2023).

India, unlike the United States, is not concerned with the global expansion of democracy. Based on its national interests, India maintains cordial ties with non-democratic regimes. India is not hesitant to engage with the military junta that overthrew the democratic regime in Myanmar in 2021, just as it did not hesitate to sell weapons to Myanmar. This frustrates the United States in its pursuit of democracy worldwide (Zakaria, 2023).

India's position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict is a significant source of irritation for the United States. This Indian policy has even enraged many India supporters in the US Congress. India has not publicly criticised or condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It assumed a neutral stance regarding the Ukraine conflict. It even abstained from voting in the United Nations General Assembly condemning Russian aggression. Even so, India continued to purchase Russian crude, which it considers essential for its energy security and economic development. Despite the prospect of US sanctions, India purchased a Russian S-400 air defence system prior to the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War. Many Western nations query how India could expect our defence assistance against Chinese ambitions when it is incapable of criticising Russian aggression.

PAKISTAN The Indo-US relationship encounters challenges that originate from the United States as well. The defence ties between Washington and Rawalpindi have consistently been a significant irritant in the broader context of India-United States relations. In the year 2022, a transaction took place involving the sale of defence equipment valued at US$ 450 million to Pakistan, specifically for the purpose of supporting its F-16 fighter aircraft. India raised objections during its meeting with Dr Lu, the US assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs, regarding the sale of spare parts to Pakistan (Siddiqa, 2022). In response, Dr Lu sought to reassure India by asserting that the sale of these spare parts would not enhance Pakistan's military capabilities (Siddiqa, 2022).

9. CONCLUSION

The relevance and strategic significance of the Indo-U.S. partnership cannot be diminished, despite its flaws. This partnership is essential for both nations, particularly in Asia, where China is exercising its muscles. The United States requires a partner in Asia capable of acting as a deterrent against China, while India requires assistance in building its military capability against China. When one considers the relationship's drawbacks, the bilateral ties between the two nations appear to be stronger. This section of the paper would analyse and respond to the disadvantages.

First, it is true that the United States has already made substantial investments in India and views it as a potential ally in its efforts to contain China. Former U.S. president Bill Clinton initiated this policy, and subsequent administrations have continued it. However, both parties are aware of this limitation, and the United States has no intention of buckpassing its responsibility in Asia to India. There is no clamour for membership in any US-led alliance from the American leadership. Rather, the United States desires a democratic and robust military in Asia that could keep China's aggressiveness preoccupied.

Both nations seek to forge a coalition based on strategic

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issues that preserves their strategic autonomy and allows them to pursue independent foreign policies. India could derive security benefits, while the United States could keep China occupied along India's border.

Second, on global issues such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the purchase of Russian oil, both nations recognise the strategic concerns of the other. There was no official statement from the American leadership pressuring India to condemn Russia for its aggression in Ukraine. Russian oil is not a major concern, as Fareed Zakaria pointed out that a complete cutoff of Russian oil from the international market would increase the price of oil (Zakaria, 2023). This increase in energy prices is also detrimental to the economies of the United States and Europe. Similarly, the Pakistan issue must no longer hinder Indo-American relations, as the United States has abandoned Pakistan in terms of friendship. Even the recent sale of F-16 hardware will not increase Pakistan's military capabilities.

Similarly, in the realm of economic relations, the United States is cognisant of the inability of India to wholly decouple its economy from the Chinese economy. There are supply chain dependencies that cannot be resolved immediately. The current Biden administration of the United States recognised the need to strengthen economic ties between the two countries, and he was successful, as the United States has emerged as the largest trading partner of India in 2022-23. The leadership of both parties could take various steps to further strengthen their ties. They should cease implementing protectionist policies and enter into targeted agreements.

It is an undeniable fact that Washington and New Delhi have recently invested a great amount of energy in strengthening their connections, and both countries expect something in return. When their expectations are grounded in realism, their bilateral connections could reach their full potential. Their ties are primarily defensive and based on their common adversary, China. Both nations must acknowledge this reality and continue bilateral relations based on realism, not idealistic values.

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