International Relations

India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue

Tags:

- **GS Paper - 2**
- **Bilateral Groupings & Agreements**
- **Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests**

For Prelims: India and US relations, India-US 2+2 Dialogue, United Nations, G-20, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), QUAD.

For Mains: India-US 2+2 Dialogue, Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Why in News?

Recently, **5th Edition of the India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue** took place, where both countries highlighted progress in various areas of bilateral cooperation including defense, semiconductors, emerging technology, space, health etc.

- The 2+2 meetings have been held annually with the US leaders since 2018.

What is a 2+2 Meeting?

- **About:**
  - The 2+2 meetings signify the **participation of two high-level representatives,** Ministers holding Foreign and Defence portfolios, from each of the two countries who aim to **enhance the scope of dialogue between them.**
  - Having such a mechanism enables the **partners to better understand and appreciate each other's strategic concerns** and sensitivities taking into account political factors on both sides, in order to build a stronger, more integrated strategic relationship in a rapidly changing global environment.
- **India's 2+2 Partners:**
  - The US is India's oldest and most important 2+2 talks partner.
  - Additionally, India has held **2+2 meetings with ministers from Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom and Russia.**

What are the Key Highlights of the India-US 2+2 Dialogue?

- **Defense Deals:**
  - Both nations aimed to collaboratively **co-develop and co-produce defence systems**, fostering a deeper partnership in defence technologies.

- India and the U.S. are currently negotiating deals for the purchase of MQ-9B unmanned aerial vehicles and the licensed manufacturer of General Electric's F-414 jet engine in India.
    - These deals align with India's goal of enhancing its defence capabilities.
- The Ministers **looked forward to the finalisation of a Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA),** a key priority in the Roadmap, which will further integrate the defence industrial ecosystems of both countries while strengthening supply chain resilience

- **Infantry Combat Vehicles and Future Plans:**
    - Both sides discussed infantry combat vehicles, particularly the Stryker, as part of the defence industry cooperation roadmap.
    - Cooperation in infantry combat systems will be formalized once the Indian military's needs are finalized, and a concrete production plan is established through collaboration between Indian and U.S. industry and military teams.
- **Advancements in Defence Technology Cooperation:**
    - Both sides reviewed the progress of the **India-U.S. Defence Industrial Ecosystem, INDUS-X,** launched in June 2023, aimed at expanding the strategic technology partnership and defence industrial cooperation.
- **Membership in Combined Maritime Forces:**
    - India's decision to become a full member of the Combined Maritime Forces, a multilateral construct headquartered in Bahrain, was welcomed by the Defense Secretary of the US.
        - This move signifies **India's commitment to regional maritime security.**
- **Maritime Security:**
    - Both nations **shared a focus on maritime security** in the Indo-Pacific region, acknowledging the importance of **safeguarding vital sea lanes** and promoting stability.
- **Space and Semiconductor Collaboration:**

    - The Ministers welcomed the rapid progress made under the India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) to build science and technology and critical technology value chain collaborations in both the commercial and defence sectors.
  - They called on the respective governments, academic, research, and corporate sectors to continue to proactively build these strategic partnerships in emerging technologies **like quantum, telecom, biotechnology,** Artificial Intelligence, and semiconductors to accelerate global innovation and benefit the economies of both countries.
  - They welcomed the early meeting of the Strategic Trade Dialogue Monitoring Mechanism.
- **Discussion on Chinese Aggression:**
  - The US emphasized that the bilateral **relationship extends beyond addressing the challenges posed by China.**
- **India-Canada Row:**
  - The ongoing row between India and Canada, particularly concerning security concerns related to a Khalistan **separatist based in the US and Canada,** was addressed.
  - India communicated its position on core security concerns to its partners.
- **Israel-Hamas War**:
  - India reiterated its stance on the Israel-Hamas Conflict, advocating for a **two-state solution (Two countries officially demarcated and Internationally Recognised)** and the early resumption of dialogue.
  - Humanitarian assistance has been provided, emphasizing adherence to international humanitarian law and the condemnation of civilian casualties.

How have been India's Relations with the US?

- **About:**

- The U.S.-India strategic partnership is founded on **shared values including a commitment to democracy** and upholding the rules-based international system.
- Both have shared interests in promoting global security, stability, and economic prosperity through trade, investment, and connectivity.

- **Economic Relations:**
  - The U.S. has emerged as India's biggest trading partner in 2022-23 on account of increasing economic ties between the two countries.
  - The bilateral trade between India and the U.S. has increased by 7.65% to USD **128.55 in 2022-23 as against USD 119.5 billion in 2021-22.**
    - Exports to the U.S. rose by 2.81% to USD 78.31 billion in 2022-23 as against USD 76.18 billion in 2021-22, while imports grew by about 16% to USD 50.24 billion.
- **International Cooperations:**
    - **India and the United States** cooperate closely at multilateral organizations, including the United Nations, G-20, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization.
  - The United States welcomed India joining the UN Security Council in 2021 for a two-year term and supports a reformed UN Security Council that includes India as a permanent member.
    - Together with Australia and Japan, the United States and India convene as the Quad to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific and provide tangible benefits to the region.
    - India is also one of twelve countries partnering with the United States on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF).
  - India is a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), at which the United States is a dialogue partner.

- In 2021, the United States joined the International Solar Alliance headquartered in India, and in 2022 the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

- **Defence Pacts:**
    - India has now signed all four foundational agreements with the US; the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016, the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018, and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial cooperation (BECA) in 2020.
- What are the Major Challenges between India and the US?

- **US Criticism of India's Foreign Policy:**
    - If the Indian elite has long seen the world through the lens of non-alignment, alliance relationships have been at the heart of US' foreign policy since the Second World War.
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        - India's policy of nonalignment especially during the Cold War has always been a point of concern for the West, especially the US.
    - After the 9/11 attacks, the US asked India to dispatch troops to Afghanistan; the Indian military vetoed the request.
        - When the US invaded Iraq in 2003, even then India's erstwhile PM withheld military support.
            - Even today, India refuses to toe the American line on the Russian-Ukraine war and its import of cheap Russian oil continues to break records.
        - Pro-US voices have often been raised demanding India to get "on the right side of history".

- **India's Engagement with US Adversaries:**

- India has criticised the US decision to block Iranian and Venezuelan oil from the open market.
- India has also held 18 rounds of talks with China to resolve the border dispute besides remaining a key participant in the China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

- **US' Criticism of India's Democracy:**
  - Various US organizations and foundations, from time to time, with the tacit support of some Congressmen and Senators, come out with reports questioning the present state of democratic discourse, press and religious freedom and condition of the minorities in India.
    - Some of them include the International Religious Freedom Report 2023 and the Human Rights Report on India 2021 by the US State Department.
- **Economic Tensions:**
  - The Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign has exacerbated the view in the US that India is increasingly becoming a protectionist closed market economy.
  - Effective in June 2019, the USA decided to withdraw duty-free benefits to Indian exporters under the GSP programme affecting India's export-oriented sectors such as pharma, textiles, agri products and automotive parts.

Way Forward

- The partnership between the two countries is critical for ensuring **a free, open, and rules-bound Indo-Pacific region.**
- The unparalleled Demographic Dividend provides enormous opportunities for the US and Indian firms for technology transfer, manufacturing, trade and investment.
- India is emerging as a leading player in an international system that is undergoing an unprecedented transformation. It shall use its present situation to explore opportunities to further its vital interests.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. ‘What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India’s National self-esteem and ambitions’. Explain with suitable examples. (2019)

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