

**SYNOPSIS**  
**FROM ESTRANGEMENT TO STRATEGIC**  
**COOPERATION: INDIA-US RELATIONS**  
**(1998-2022)**

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## **The Research**

The present research has attempted to chart out the course of India-U.S. strategic relations over the period 1998 to 2022. From a low in bilateral relations and overshadowed by the U.S. sanctions in 1998 in the aftermath of the nuclear tests at Pokhran by India, the relationship has turned a full circle with unprecedented advances in strengthening mutuality and defence and strategic relationship. The focus of the research work is on how to best understand and analyse the transformation in the relationship. This exercise was carried out with reference to certain milestones in this transformation like the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between the two countries, joint collaborative measures in fighting international terrorism, enhanced defence cooperation including the COMCASA agreement and increased cooperation between the two countries especially in Indo-Pacific. The research was expected to cover the period from 1998 to 2018. However, certain recent advances in the last few years including the increased level of strategic symmetry over Indo-Pacific region and the framework of cooperation through QUAD necessitated an extension of the period of this research and consequently the scope of the work has also been expanded accordingly till 2022.

## **Backdrop**

India and the United States of America (USA) are constitutional democracies and share mutuality in their international outlook over the decades. The foundation of this mutuality is based on respect for diversity and commitment to democratic values. However, the international relations and foreign policy of the two countries have not adequately reflected this mutuality. For a considerable part of the last seventy-five years, both the countries have not been under favourable terms, whether

in relation to the Cold War era global politics or on the question of a more equitable international economic order or on the issues related to nuclear proliferation. The two countries have also differed with each other in the past on major issues of war and peace, whether in Indo- China (Mainland South East Asia) or in West Asia. India and the U.S. have adopted opposing international stances repeatedly on questions related to democratization of international institutions and on the question of interference in the domestic affairs of UN Member States. Most importantly, however, both India and the U.S. have adopted a diametrically opposite stand on issues related to disarmament and nuclear proliferation. While the U.S. has insisted on an independent course and sought to build a massive arms and weapons structure for its defence and protection of its allies in its quest for supremacy, India's approach to disarmament has focused, in the beginning, on the universality of disarmament, and since the late 1960s, against the discriminatory nature of nuclear non-proliferation efforts. Moreover, India was always critical of the U.S.' geo-strategic goal of Cold War that possibly necessitated an active courting of Pakistan since 1950s by incorporating Pakistan in its alliance system. India has insisted that the U.S.' attempts to artificially bring about parity in the sub-continent by bolstering Pakistan through military aid and political support has destabilized political order in South Asia and that the U.S. has been oblivious of the challenges posed by a nuclear China in insisting India's accession to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This understanding informed and guided the Indian foreign policy measures and to a large extent contributed to the downside in India-U.S. relations through 1970s.

A major fallout of the acrimony and distrust between the two countries emerged in the form of opposition and even hostility in the early 1970s when India was compelled to intervene in the humanitarian crisis in east Pakistan and later on

militarily respond to Pakistan's attack. The reorganization of political order in South Asia with the emergence of a new sovereign entity Bangladesh demonstrated India's preeminence in the region but it was much later that the U.S. could reconcile itself to the changed reality.

These manifold factors dictated the pathways of India-U.S. relations for a long period of time. Even though the U.S. was appreciative of the democratic structures that India had built and its struggle to overcome abject poverty and adverse economic conditions, the U.S. was reluctant to consider India as a friend. While India's potential role as a counterweight to China in the early 1960s did figure in the U.S. calculations, India's overall political stand on Cold War and its leadership role in the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) was a dampener for the U.S. The bilateral ties in regard to trade as well as U.S. economic aid to India was very much on the table but these did not help chart a new pathway for India-U.S. relations on stronger terms. The USSR's intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, in fact, further delayed the emergence of symmetry between the two countries. While America went ahead with an active political and military support role for the domestic forces in Afghanistan opposed to the Soviet Union and the political regime it fostered, India took a much more cautious and nuanced approach. It did not support the counter-military opposition in Afghanistan led by Pakistan with the active military support of the U.S. India argued that this would bring in Cold War politics into South Asia and economic and military aid to Pakistan would be liable to be misused and directed against India's interest. In effect, developments centered on Afghanistan denied India and the U.S. the opportunities to forge better ties which had already strained due to the peaceful nuclear explosion test carried out by India in Pokhran in May 1974.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the end of the Cold War led to a reordering of international relations on a grand scale. Consequently, the foreign policy orientation of India also underwent certain changes that were in consonance with friendly ties with the U.S. Since the mid-1980s, India had started focusing on technology in its bid to modernize the country and possible the U.S. help and collaboration was increasingly viewed positively in India. This aspiration was in consonance with the relative opening of Indian economy in response to unprecedented financial crisis in India in the early to the mid-1990s. Liberalization of economy and other structural reforms initiated in India during these years was considered favourably by the U.S. and both the countries initiated measures to boost ties. These measures were now part of an expanded area of cooperation between the two countries and included bilateral trade, technology transfer, human resources and defence purchases. While the relationship was going to take off in a positive direction with enormous future possibilities and potential, India's decision to test its nuclear weapon in Pokhran in 1998 delivered a huge jolt in relations. For all practical purposes, India had declared itself as a nuclear weapon power. It had in effect challenged the international nuclear non-proliferation regime led by the 5 nuclear weapon powers. The U.S. considered itself as the guardian of the non-proliferation regime and India's open defiance of what it always regarded as a discriminatory regime, took the India-U.S. relations to a new low. The U.S. imposed severe sanctions against India and attempted to broaden its ambit by an active international campaign.

The above analysis of the trajectory of India-U.S. relations up to the Pokhran nuclear weapon test by India in 1998 provides the backdrop of the research undertaking on India-U.S. strategic relations.

## **The 1998 Moment**

The 1998 moment is the starting point for the research work done here. The aftermath of the Pokhran test resulted in widespread curbs on India in the realm of defence and technology, constraining the country severely. At the same time, in retrospect the 1998 decision to go nuclear can also be seen as the starting point of a newer understanding of India based on its strength and enormous economic and political clout which the U.S. could hardly overlook. Since then, both the countries have worked hard to fashion a new and enhanced relationship that is developing in many directions over the last more than two decades. The 9/11 terrorist attack on the U.S. led to the “war on terror” waged by the U.S. and allies. This also led to the need for cooperation and collaboration with India, a country facing terrorist attacks repeatedly and raising the issue of threat from terrorism as a major plank of its foreign policy especially with Pakistan. The U.S. could now readily see and appreciate the Indian stand on terrorism and the need to take resolute measures at the international level. The convergence between the two countries on the issue of terrorism helped in downgrading the hostility the U.S. had displayed in the wake of the 1998 nuclear test. At the same time India was taking several measures to assuage the U.S. and other countries of its own commitments for preserving the nuclear order. One of the aims was to reduce the vulnerabilities from the sanctions and simultaneously work toward its eventual withdrawal.

## **Civil Nuclear Cooperation**

The major contention of India against the sanction was that it did not distinguish between India’s civil nuclear programme and the nuclear weapons programme. While the former was a feature of India’s scientific quest since the 1950s and

received international support and collaboration, the nuclear weapons component was strictly indigenous and was in response to the threat it faced from both Pakistan and China. India agreed that the country may not avail and that it has never availed international support for its nuclear weapon programme but there was no need and rationale for severance of international cooperation for the development of nuclear programme in the civil domain.

This is a necessity for the country's energy security and hence arbitrary measures to block India's access to international market for goods and technology for civil nuclear energy purposes is irrational and discriminatory. Consistent effort by both the Vajpayee Government as well as the subsequent Manmohan Singh Government, to highlight the distinction and underline its commitment not to use the nuclear weapons except to retaliate when faced with nuclear weapon attack, was recognized and eventually paid off when India and the U.S. embarked on the path of a lengthy and tortuous journey to conclude the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement in 2006 and added to the strength of their cooperation by several other complementary measures.

## **2022 Situation**

More recently India and the U.S. conducted 2+2 dialogue, between the U.S. Secretary of State and Secretary of Defence on the one hand and Indian Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Defence on the other. The closer bilateral, security and strategic ties built between the two countries over the last two decades, after the freeze in the relationship in 1998, is significant in many respects. Not only have the two countries signed the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), they have opened up a series of initiatives that binds the two sides on

a much more secured framework in defence and strategic cooperation. The 2+2 dialogue has further firmed the defence and security ties between the two countries. In 2022, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi met each other twice- first on the sidelines of the QUAD summit in Tokyo and again on the margins of the G-20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia. Additionally, there was 2+2 Ministerial Meeting in Washington DC and several visits by senior members of the Governments of the two sides.

## **Objectives of the Research**

1. Analysis and interpretation of the transformation in India-U.S. strategic relations from the “low” of 1998 to the “high” of 2022.
2. To delineate the course of transformation in bilateral relations in four identified areas: nuclear cooperation, counter-terrorism, defence relations and Indo-Pacific security.
3. To identify the divergences in approach and discord in mutual relations impacting the content, quality and direction of the relationship.
4. To understand and answer the question if the transformation in relationship is confined to a strengthened bilateral partnership or it could transcend the relationship of both the countries with other states and actors.

## **Scope**

The thesis is time specific and specific to the context. Despite the possibilities of a compact strength between the two countries, in the aftermath of the disintegration of Soviet Union and India adopting liberalization in its economy, India-U.S. relations



suffered a major setback in 1998. The Pokhran nuclear test of 1998 and the consequent sanctions against India resulted in a very fast deterioration in relationship. The starting point of the thesis therefore is 1998 constituting the “low”. Initially it was proposed that the thesis would focus on the period 1998-2018. However, subsequently the scope of the research work had to be extended, to cover the period up to 2022, both because of the continued high-level bilateral engagements as well as due to the growing emphasis on the Indo-Pacific region by both the two countries. Several milestone developments in this respect encouraged the researcher to expand and extend the scope of the work so as to present an updated account in what seems to be a fast evolving bilateral relationship within the framework of a dynamic, multilateral and a multipolar world. In 2022, the relationship has not only improved but both the countries are committed to “strategic partnership”. This transformation, covering about a quarter century from 1998 to 2022 is the period of study for this thesis.

## **Research Gap**

Most of the publications on India and the U.S. strategic relations are good account of different facets and aspects of the relationship. However, an analysis of interdependent factors and variables significant to the relationship is missing. For example, there is hardly any literature that focuses on the gaps and shortcomings of the civil nuclear cooperation agreement as it failed to take into account the structural and legal constraints in the implementation of the agreement. Therefore, much of the analysis and literature is devoted to salutary and congratulatory aspects of the “breakthrough” without adequately analyzing the questions that were left unanswered and which consequently had an adverse impact on the success of the agreement.

Similarly, even though much has been written about the India-U.S. synergy in anti-terrorism goals but the focus on differing approaches to the sources of terrorism as well as how best to confront or engage the lead players in sponsoring of terrorism has hardly received the deserved focus. India-U.S. cooperation in this domain is crucially dependent on the U.S. policy toward both Pakistan and Afghanistan but the interdependent context is seldom analysed in depth. In the context of defence relationship too, while much attention is drawn to enhanced level of cooperation and purchases, the issue related to transfer of cutting edge technology has been missing from the discourse. In regard to approach toward Indo-Pacific, much attention is focused on the “containment” of China but the nature and extent of interdependence between the U.S. and China is not examined. Similarly, much focus on India-China discord and a possible rivalry between the two sides have been highlighted but the impact of extensive and fast growing economic relationship between the two sides and the mitigating nature of such ties on strategic rivalry has not been analysed adequately.

## **Research Questions**

The following set of research questions covering the entirety of relationship of the two countries as well as questions related to specific areas have been raised in the research work.

Broad Questions:

1. Is it possible to contextualize the India-U.S. strategic relationship as a global partnership or is it best to understand it as a strengthened bilateral partnership?

2. Is it possible for India-U.S. strategic partnership to overwhelm and overshadow U.S.-China and U.S.-Pakistan relationship?

#### Issue Specific Questions:

1. Have there been substantive changes in the level of collaboration between India and the U.S. on counter-terrorism efforts?
2. Have India and the U.S. been able to overcome the structural and legal constraints for achieving enhanced cooperation in the civil nuclear domain?
3. How are India and the U.S. conducting their defence ties and strategic cooperation?
4. What is the outlook and approach of the two countries towards Indo-Pacific region?

The structure of the thesis has been designed as to respond to the above broad and specific set of questions. The thesis in general attempts to answer the two broad research questions throughout the six chapters and the four specific research questions are addressed in the last four chapters of the thesis.

### **Research Methodology and Sources**

The present thesis is an attempt to answer the research questions related to the bilateral relationship between India and U.S. within the context of the dynamic multilateral relationship of the two countries. As such, the discussion and analysis, flowing from the extensive primary sources have been supplemented by secondary sources that attempt to interpret the dynamics involved. Description, analysis and interpretation form the content of the thesis and as such a historical-descriptive

approach and qualitative methodology has been adopted in the preparation of this thesis. The primary sources consisting of Congressional records and parliamentary proceedings, national policy documents and agreements and statements have been consulted. Historical records of the dynamics of the relationship have been analysed based on extensive consultation of the declassified papers of the U.S. State Department. Secondary sources in the form of books and scholarly articles in various journals as well as commentary by well recognized experts in newspapers and on online platforms have also been consulted.

## **Chapters**

The research work has been carried out by distributing the content in the six broad chapters, following the introduction to the thesis. Conclusion together with research findings a Select Bibliography forms part of the thesis at the end.

This thesis has presented a comprehensive account of the bilateral relationship between India and the United States of America within the framework of multilateral and interdependent issues and challenges facing the two largest democracies of the world. The scope of the research work has entailed the entirety of relations between India and the U.S. in so far as these impact the foreign policy and security relations of the two countries. The research scheme has sought to highlight the transition of the relationship from the ‘low’ of 1998 when the U.S. imposed a series of sanctions against India in the wake of India’s assertion as a nuclear weapon state through Pokhran-II tests to the high point in the relations recently achieved through an active and ongoing 2+2 dialogues, India’s identification as a ‘major defence partner’ by the U.S., the QUAD processes and a broad convergence in the international outlook and

approach toward the Indo-Pacific region. An Introduction to the thesis has been followed by the six chapters constituting the research work.

The subject matter of **Chapter 1** was the relationship between India and the U.S. during the formative years and subsequently up to 1998. The content was analysed from a variety of perspectives and developments over more than five decades. It was possible to extensively consult the primary source materials, now unclassified to conclude that notwithstanding assertions in favour of India's freedom, the U.S. was constrained by its relations with Great Britain from pursuing it boldly and vociferously. Moreover, the Cold War ideological rivalry and political and military confrontation with the USSR dictated America's choices of friends and partners. Pakistan was willing to sub-serve the American interest and India clearly was against military entanglement. As such, even while the U.S. considered India in a positive light, on the question of democracy and development, foreign aid and some military support post the border war with China, India and U.S. were not aligned in political and security terms. The divergences between the two countries during the Cold War period and India's reasoning in favour of a policy of non-alignment and stance against bloc politics has been analysed in this chapter. It was also necessary to chart the policy and approach of the U.S. Government during the four war India fought since its independence up to 1971. Three of these wars were against Pakistan and there was also the 1962 border conflict with China. Pakistan received the priority in the foreign policy matrix of the U.S. and though the U.S. was neutral during the 1965 India-Pakistan war, its biasness in favour of Pakistan was obvious during the 1971 confrontation and war. The chapter has also focused on India's peace advocacy, and the debate over the U.S. support in the 1950s for India's membership in the Security Council. Pokhran-1 had led to rethinking on the part of the U.S. on

the continued support for fueling of Tarapur nuclear power plant and the difficult negotiations carried out by the two sides.

The **Chapter 2** of the thesis essentially focused on the developments prior to and more extensively subsequent to the “1998 Moment” constituting India’s decision to go nuclear. Following the end of the Cold War with the disintegration of the USSR, it was open to the United States to reorient its foreign policy and international relations anew. Relationship with India emerged as an important component of the U.S. policy toward South Asia. In India too, inauguration of liberalization in the era of globalization contained the possibility of opening up to the world economy, broadening of the economic ties and foreign trade. This helped shape up a new understanding of India in the international arena. The U.S. and India embarked on revitalizing their relations and rapid progress in certain sectors were made. However, the Pokhran-11 nuclear tests to assert India’s nuclear weapon capabilities in May 1998 complicated the ongoing progresses in bilateral relations. The tests were an assertion of India’s new found status as a nuclear weapon state, completely overshadowing the concerns and reservations over nuclear proliferation. In pursuance of its strong anti-proliferation stance, the U.S. not only imposed sanctions on India but it went on to encourage other countries to follow suit. The backdrop and the context of the “1998 Moment” which was a milestone development in the foreign policy of the country, in its relations with the United States and the international community and a culmination of developments actuated both by security considerations vis a vis China and Pakistan has been analysed in the chapter. The decision to go nuclear was also a result of domestic public opinion and political dynamism in the context of India’s vulnerabilities. The international fallout of the nuclear tests in the form of sanctions and how constructive diplomatic engagements

paved the way for a gradual thaw in the India-U.S. relations, and finally withdrawal of the sanctions, albeit in the light of the devastating 9/11 attack on the U.S., was also extensively captured in the chapter.

The second Chapter had delineated the course of India-U.S. relations in the wake of Pokhran-II and how a debilitating sanctions regime against India imposed by the U.S. and other international actors had pushed India into a corner. The **Chapter 3** of the thesis essentially recounts the circumstances and developments leading to the weakening, dilution and finally the withdrawal of sanctions in the backdrop of active negotiations between the two sides. A great facilitation in the process undoubtedly was the devastating 9/11 attack on the U.S. This convinced the US the imperative of befriending India and to do so even to go to the extent of effecting necessary changes in its domestic legislation concerning nuclear proliferation. The US was also interested in not isolating a democracy like India when the business and trade ties were expected to bear fruit for American companies and corporations. The U.S. therefore was not interested in isolating India and was ready to calibrate its non-proliferation concerns in a way that India gets the necessary breather. India was also interested in ending its isolation and wished to gain access to international markets and as such both sides decided to leave enough room to maneuver and negotiate. An intense phase of negotiations across various sectors but essentially concerning cooperation in civil nuclear domain was launched by both the sides.

A difficult part was how best to address the concerns and apprehensions of the U.S. domestic political opinion and the hard stance of U.S. lawmakers who were upset with India's flouting of international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The U.S. administration attempted to separate the two aspects- cooperation in civil nuclear

energy sector and the supply of fuel and other essentials in regard to manufacturing of nuclear weapons and capabilities for the same. India reasoned that it was not interested and nor dependent on international cooperation and supply for its nuclear weapons and the necessary deterrence capacity in this respect. However, India argued that its civilian nuclear energy programme should not be affected. The U.S. administration attempted to assuage its domestic opposition and Congressional leaders about the usefulness of the distinction and value of India's friendship for America's economic, security and strategic interests.

The civil nuclear agreement was an outcome of parleys over the years undertaken by the Vajpayee Government in India and the Bush administration in the U.S. It was carried forward by Manmohan Singh's Government and the two sides could conclude a historic agreement on civil nuclear cooperation. These involved overcoming oppositions both in India as well as in the U.S. However, structural, and legal impediments have thwarted extension of cooperation though India's isolation could end as it gained U.S. support to obtain waiver from many of the countries which had imposed sanctions.

The context, contour and the direction of cooperation between India and the U.S. on counter-terrorism are analysed in **Chapter 4** of the thesis. While India has battled and suffered from the scourge of terrorism for long, the full weight and terrorizing consequences of extremist action was felt by the United States when 9/11 attack were perpetrated on the American territory. The American –led 'war on terrorism' needed worldwide friends and allies and there was no hesitation in the U.S. to court India's support. This support was readily extended by India and both the countries in subsequent years have achieved a lot of synergy and have established a good and



effective cooperative mechanism. The cooperative synergy was powerful enough to persuade the administration and the law-makers in the U.S. to weaken, dilute and then even finally withdraw the series of sanctions imposed on India following Pokhran-II.

The India-U.S. cooperation on counter-terrorism has witnessed unprecedented level of information and intelligence sharing, joint training, use of a variety of consultation mechanism, involvement of officials charged with the responsibility of police and security functions as well as the organizations and agencies mandated to cover organized crimes and international terrorism. The chapter describes the approach and action of the United Nations against terrorism, growing number of international conventions against terrorism, the nature and extend of terrorism directed against India and the United States and finally described, charted and analysed the policy response and measures adopted by the two countries against terrorism. Cooperation in security matters invariably involves a lot of secrecy as well as a lot of reservations. As such, failure to coax Pakistan and China to join the efforts to designate individuals and groups responsible for terrorist acts has often acted as a dampener in the relationship. However, in an indirect way, Pakistan's encouragement and complicity in many of the terrorist attacks, in India and in Afghanistan has been exposed and consequently the U.S. has been able to take action against Pakistan in certain limited way. Cooperation framework advanced through dialogue and deliberations between the two countries on counter-terrorism has helped the bilateral relations to advance into a partnership between the two of the largest democracies of the world fighting the menace of terrorism.

The **Chapter 5** detailed the trajectory of defence and strategic ties and cooperation between India and the U.S. and sought to find out evidence for the upgradation in the

ties. The analysis sought to find answers to the question as to whether and to what extent these ties can be considered to have constituted a global partnership between the two countries. The U.S. was sympathetic to the cause of India's independence but the compulsion of a strengthened relationship with Great Britain, especially during the course of the Second World War, and immediately later on due to dawn of the Cold War, the U.S. support for India's freedom was never vociferous. The so-called ideological struggle vis-à-vis the USSR took the center stage in U.S. policy and approach to international issues and affairs. Therefore, even though the U.S. policy toward India was sympathetic but it never surpassed its support for Pakistan. After all, Pakistan joined military pacts and alliances led by the U.S., in contrast to India's nonalignment. The U.S. tried to maintain a political balance between India and Pakistan but on the defence and strategic aspects, the U.S. favoured Pakistan. Consequently, India-U.S. defence relations could not move forward.

A new complication emerged in the form of U.S. considering Pakistan as a frontline state in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The U.S. was determined to contain the USSR in Afghanistan during 1980 to 1989 and this broader goal dictated its lukewarm attitude and approach to India. Subsequently in the early through late 1990s, however, India-U.S. defence ties and security cooperation underwent various phases and turns. A number of instrumentalities, dialogue framework and the growing organizational and institutional apparatus started to inform the positive turn in the relationship.

Over the last decades, a lot of progress in the defence and security domain has been made by the two countries. This however has not been able to completely remove the reservations especially on the question of transfer of high-end technology. There are certain bottlenecks and a level of anxiety and suspicion in the defence and

strategic cooperation. It is not possible for India not to source its defence requirements from Russia. The U.S. finds itself on a spot when it comes to taking action against India for its dealings in weapons system from Russia. The support for extending waiver for India, now a major defence partner and one of the significant friendly country for the U.S., is getting louder and most of the policymakers in the U.S. cannot accept any dilution in relations with India, particularly in the context of a threat from China for leadership and supremacy in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. It is also significant to note that India and the U.S. are on completely different pages on some of the most pressing and challenging developments in the international arena. Russia-Ukraine war is the prime example. The differing and even contrasting stance of the two countries on the ongoing war shows the limitations of the defence and security partnership between India and the U.S.

**Chapter 6** of the thesis has focused on the Indo-Pacific region- a region of prime importance and significance for both the countries. The buoyancy in the relationship has much derived from the common approaches both the countries are trying to develop. The need and necessity to politically balance China and contain the military might of China is in the declared interest of both the U.S. and India. This however does not mean that the two countries follow a similar view. There are important differences in the two country's construct of the Indo-Pacific region. Again, both the countries are engaged and involved with China in many respect, particularly in the economic domain. Moreover, countries like Japan and India are more directly impacted by the Chinese ascendancy in the region in immediate terms and hence their approach may not coincide with that of the United States. The U.S. is fully cognizant of the reality and is therefore encouraging of the good relationship between the stakeholder countries. This strategy also fits in with the U.S. policy to

encourage burden sharing in matters related to defence and security in the region. It is worth noting that countries like Germany and France have also decided to pull in their weight in favour of an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. The United Kingdom has also lately started taking an active interest in the region. Therefore, a consultation process amongst the like-minded countries for a consensus on the security architecture in the Indo-Pacific is in common interest. The United States and India both benefit from an expanded and common approach amongst the stakeholder countries and the positive relationship between the two countries would play a constructive role in the security and development of the Indo-Pacific region.

## **Research Findings**

The research undertaken in this thesis has attempted to answer the research questions raised on the entirety of relationship of the India and the United States as well as questions related to specific areas of cooperation between the two countries.

It has been asked in the research questions *if it is possible to contextualize the India-U.S. strategic relationship as a global partnership or is it best to understand it as a strengthened bilateral partnership*. Despite an unprecedented level of synergy and cooperation, India and the U.S. are not global partners in any specific domain or area of international engagement. Though there has been significant convergence, there are no indications that divergences in the relationship, whether on the question of international outlook or on issues related to peace and conflict in the Middle East, democratization of international institutions, strategy vis a vis China, war between Russia and Ukraine, a common position on Pakistan etc. have been sorted out between the two countries. As such, even when the two countries have been able to arrive at a strengthened relationship and extended the scope of

their cooperation, the two countries are far removed from achieving a global partnership.

Another broad research question addressed by this thesis is *whether it has been possible for India-U.S. strategic partnership to overwhelm and overshadow U.S.-China and U.S.-Pakistan relationship*. The research undertaken for this thesis has demonstrated that the answer to this question is in the negative. The U.S. and India are both committed to contain China, more specifically in the context of an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. But this understanding has not been enough to undercut U.S.-China relations, specifically in terms of economic interdependence of the two countries. Lately, the U.S. and China have differed and clashed on a number of issue areas but these have been short of building up of any coalition against each other. On Pakistan too, the U.S. policy and stance have undergone significant changes in the last two decades but this has been confined more in the realm of U.S.' counter-terrorism effort. As such even when the U.S. has been critical of Pakistan and has cut out financial packages to the country, it has enjoyed good understanding and accommodation with Pakistan on Afghanistan, to the extent of intensive negotiation and active collaboration for the facilitation of the return of the Taliban in the aftermath of the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from that country.

Certain questions related to specific area of collaboration between the two countries were raised in the thesis. *Have there been substantive changes in the level of collaboration between India and the U.S. on counter-terrorism?* The answer to the question is in the positive. India had long suffered the painful consequences of terrorist activities and terrorism and this was not much appreciated by the U.S. in the 1990s. However, both the countries are on the same page on the threat posed by terrorism especially in the backdrop of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the U.S. There

have been a very high level of cooperation and collaboration between the two countries and India has been able to garner the support of the U.S. on terrorism related aspects and issues, emanating from Pakistan. It has also been possible for India to achieve the active support of the U.S. in the UN and other international forums against Pakistan, especially in the context of designating some of the prominent terrorist groups as such and build up international opinion against them and their sponsors. Both the U.S. and India have been able to scale up and infuse qualitative collaboration against terrorism and terrorist groups and we see a very high level of convergence in this regard.

Yet another research question asked if India and the U.S. have been able to overcome the structural and legal constraints for achieving enhanced cooperation in the civil nuclear domain. The answer to this question is complex. India has received the support of the U.S. in overcoming the sanctions imposed in the wake of the Pokhran-II nuclear tests. The civil nuclear cooperation as such was expected to be revitalized. However, due to a number of legal issues related to full scope safeguards, it has not been possible for the two countries to achieve cooperation at a desired level. In fact, despite the support of the U.S., India has not been able to become part of the nuclear suppliers group though India has been able to access the international nuclear market and has received waiver and exceptions for its nuclear facilities for peaceful uses.

Last two questions raised in this thesis is about *the conduct of defence and security cooperation between India and the U.S. and approach and outlook of the two countries toward Indo-Pacific region*. Chapter 5 and 6 of the thesis were devoted to the examination of these two questions. The answer is that the two countries have strengthened their defence ties and security cooperation. A lot of agreements have

been inked to facilitate defence cooperation and mechanisms at the highest levels of the Governments of the two countries has been established. Defence purchases from the U.S. has been prioritized by India. However, this has not meant ending of defence relations with Russia. Despite the reservations openly expressed by the U.S. Government, India has gone ahead with defence purchases with Russia. Moreover, the differing approach of India and the U.S. over Russia-Ukraine war has shown that there are effective limitations on the India-U.S. relations. The bilateral content in the relationship has grown richer over the years but independent course of foreign policy choices and priorities of India cannot be discounted by the U.S.

With regard to the outlook towards the Indo-Pacific region, the two sides have been able to achieve a great degree of convergence. The interests of the two countries converge on Indo-Pacific region and therefore both the countries have achieved a lot of synergy in their approach toward the region. However, this has not been enough to overcome the differences amongst the partners and some of the allies of the U.S. in the region. There is no unanimity on a definitive approach towards China. India, Australia and Japan are not confident about steadfastness of the U.S.' commitment to the security of Indo-Pacific region. They are also wary of causing any provocation to China. Besides, India is always chary of aligning itself with any country through an alliance system as this would undermine its independence. Therefore, we may say that both India and the U.S. are engaged in building framework of cooperation but they are not necessarily aligned to each other's approach and stance towards China in the region.

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