

THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND HOW CHINA'S INFLUENCE CHALLENGES THE INDIA-US ALLIANCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

MUKESH SHANKAR BHARTI¹

Jawaharlal Nehru University (India)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to find out the main approaches and rationale for bilateral India-US cooperation. India relies on the United States for security in the Indo-Pacific and its neighbourhood. Furthermore, India has serious security threats in its neighbourhood on the northern and Himalayan borders. The research investigates the bilateral cooperation between both countries. Why is the USA more important to India for the purpose of the security and defence sectors in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region? The investigation of this study uses the empirical method with an analytical approach. As result, the India-US strategic partnership is on the right track, and there is no conflict of interest in the Indo-Pacific or at a global level. Furthermore, this research recommends that India needs to win the hearts of its South Asian neighbourhood to limit the Chinese involvement in these countries.

KEY WORDS: *India, USA, China, Indo-Pacific, South Asia, geo-politics, security.*

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Introduction

India has had major security issues on its northeast border with China and Pakistan since the 1990s. China and Pakistan attacked India without provocation. There is rivalry between India and China in various dimensions and various perceptions of threats. China and India are two countries that have common interests in the Indo-Pacific, but China unilaterally creates problems in the Himalayan border areas. The recent Doklam standoff and clash at Lake Pangong between the Indian and Chinese armies created serious security problems in South Asia. The USA has been facing a tough challenge in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific region from China's aggressive policy. Thus, China's expansionist policy in the Indo-Pacific region has brought India and the United States closer as strategic partners (Athwal, 2008; Bharti, 2022; Garver, 2007; Holslag, 2009; Mohan, 2012a).

The growing Chinese influence in Pakistan and Sri Lanka is a warning for India in South Asia. Pakistan is a de facto ally of China, and its principal strategic partner in the region. Since the 1960s and 1970s, Pakistan has been a major arms importer from China, and the Chinese authorities provide strategic support. Pakistan has been using this military equipment against India. The relationship between China and Pakistan is called an 'all-weather friendship'. India's strategic role in Pakistan is limited, in the context of China's deeper connection. The two countries have engaged in mutually facilitating the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region. China and Pakistan are jointly developing fighter jets and missiles. The CPEC is directly connecting China to the port of Gwadar, which is strategically important in this area. Meanwhile, the USA is successful

¹ Mukesh Shankar Bharti – post-doctoral researcher in international relations, Centre for European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067
Scientific interests: democracy, political institutions, East and Central Europe, the European Union, South Asia
E-mail: msbharti.jnu@gmail.com

in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz from the point of view of free navigation, and may be able to mitigate the Chinese presence. Thus, China encircles India from Gwadar to Hambantota on the western side of the country (Brewster, 2015: 56).

India and the United States signed the Defense Framework Agreement on 28 June 2005. The agreement for ten years is a landmark decision by both countries. It will help to change the geostrategic scenario, and will set the agenda for India and the USA in the region. India understands that the US presence in the region will provide a good environment for peace and stability. The Pacific and the Indian Ocean need a balance of power, and the US-India alliance has an agenda for this region to work together with other European countries as well (Samuel, 2007: 209). India is trying to modernise its military, and needs to work on military doctrine to respond to its opponent in the face of future grave challenges. This research answers the following questions: 1) How do India and the USA cultivate defence cooperation; and 2) To what extent are India and the USA able to restrict Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region? The research uses primary and secondary data to find the research outcomes.

1. Review of literature and the theoretical background

The Trump administration had a good connection with the Indian prime minister Narendra Modi. The visit to India by former US President Trump ushered in a new era of strategic cooperation, and coined the concept of the Indo-Pacific (Mishra, 2018: 1). India and the USA agreed to shape the strategic partnership and strengthen and deepen the relationship between both countries. Since 2004, the two countries have accelerated the deepening of the association, and have successfully concluded several defence agreements. Apart from the defence deal, both countries successfully incorporated numerous cyber-security, economic and global initiatives after 2004 (Vijayalakshmi, 2017: 43–44). China's growing footprint on the subcontinent has eclipsed India's aspirations in South Asia. Chinese policies have been to encircle India in this region through its extensive geo-economic connectivity. China's flagship project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is connecting South Asian countries. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has gone beyond the Pakistan-controlled Jammu and Kashmir region. The China-Pakistan nexus is creating security problems on India's northeast border. China's growing economy is supporting the cultivation of new geo-economic connectivity in the region. Its military modernisation has been ahead of Asian countries (Singh et al., 2018).

India is very much aware of China's aspiration to become a security power in Asia. Chinese policy is working to replace the position of the USA in the region in the context of security and geopolitics. China's BRI is a geopolitical tool for acquiring more areas to establish an extensive presence. India understands that bilateral cooperation with the USA may curb China's strategic aspirations in South Asia (Lute, 2022). US diplomacy towards South Asia has high hopes for India on the international stage. Blackwill and Tellis (2019) say that India is rich in resources, populous and large, and that there is the presence of all appearances in the country; therefore, it is a superpower in waiting. India is a champion in promoting the democratic ethos in the world and representing the largest democracy, which is key positive element for India, and Washington has high hopes of India cooperating in Asia and in the Indo-Pacific. India could be a crucial global partner in the region, to restrict the rising authoritarian challenges in the region (Blackwill, Tellis, 2019).

Today's global world order focuses on grabbing power to explore business in various locations at an international level. The concept of geostrategy became a central part of geopolitics for the rising country in the field of economics. In international theory and practice, the balance of power is a central policy and a key approach to running an economic policy in modern-day international relations. In the context of India-US cooperation in South Asia, and also in the Indo-Pacific region, there is a struggle between economic powers to expand their presence and strengthen the naval base for security reasons. US policy balances the power in this region for a secure and safe navy to counter the Chinese Maritime Silk Route Initiatives (MSRI). That is why the USA initiated a deep relationship with India to maintain the balance of power. The USA wants to establish common cooperation, which should be based on equilibrium between states. According to Hans Morgenthau, states do not always focus on the balance of power, but the mechanism of the superiority of

power is a key approach for any state. Equality is one of the key approaches to the use of power by any state to cooperate with another power. But some nations seek to obtain the maximum power under any type of circumstances (Morgenthau, 1960).

2. Data and methodology

The Kargil War was a new milestone in India-US relations, as President Bill Clinton mediated to stop the war between India and Pakistan. Clinton criticised Pakistan's aggression towards Indian territory in 1999. It was the first time the USA openly came near to India at an international level to support the Indian stance. It was a crucial juncture in India-US relations, formed for deeper cooperation (Riedel, 2019). The US interest in Asia intersected with India's national interests. China's rise is noticeable to the USA, but it does not just matter to its involvement in Asia. India is very keen on the issue of security and the stability of the region's states. US policy supports Indian concerns in this region, because of the sovereignty of independent states. China's expansionist policy and its dominance over South Asian states make India support Washington. In 2008, the civil nuclear deal was the trademark of India-US cooperation. This deal was successfully attempted by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The USA finally decided to establish a friendly relationship with India, and to try and forget the uncomfortable experience. India become a nuclear power, and the USA accepts it as a *de facto* nuclear-armed country (Pant, Joshi, 2017: 134). After the successful nuclear deal, India showed that it is a responsible country in the use of nuclear energy, and further fostered extensive cooperation in defence, the economy and strategy.

There have been perceived threats from a rising China that caused the USA to promote bilateral strategic cooperation. This is the principal reason why the USA changed its policy towards India (Rice, 2000). In the post-Cold War period, China emerged as a stronger country because of the growth of its economy. Since 1962, when China attacked India, India has been keenly aware of Chinese ascendancy in the region. George W. Bush's administration nurtured India-US convergence, and the perception of threats has been increasing in the South Asia region. India is also very serious about shaping its cooperation with the USA to get modern military equipment (Rajagopalan, 2008: 547–548).

Moreover, the Bush administration developed strategic cooperation between India and the USA. Before 2000, the Indian perception across the country was that the USA was a strategic partner of Pakistan, India's arch-rival. This scenario changed under the George W. Bush presidency. The 'pivot to Asia' strategy led by US President Barack Obama focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation with New Delhi. Obama visited India twice while in office to deepen the relationship with the UPA and National Democratic Alliance (NDA) governments (Purayil, 2021: 65). Later, when Donald Trump came to power, he expanded the policies of the former presidents, and began deeper maritime cooperation with India in the Indo-Pacific. India also needed a partner in the region for extensive security cooperation to restrict the Chinese footprint in Pacific politics. The Trump administration was highly interested in maritime economic routes, and in forming strategic cooperation between regional powers, because in maritime politics there is a huge amount of rivalry between the USA and China across the Indo-Pacific region (Ashbee, Parpiani, 2019).

Geostrategic policy pits India against China in the region of the Indo-Pacific. Chinese scholars understand that the two rising Asian powers have a deep connection in the region. China's think-tank understands and recognises India's potential in the Indian Ocean (Walgreen, 2006). Zhu Fenggang articulates that the Indian strategy is aggressively involved in expanding its naval approach at various choke points in the ocean (Fenggang, 2006). India is supporting its navy in securing maritime routes from the Malacca Straits to the Gulf of Aden, hence India's willingness to strengthen its positions in the region in the context of the India Naval presence. China's policy is to restrict Indian advantages in the Indian Ocean region. Because of India's stronghold in this region, China is aware of the Indian advantages. India's geostrategic location is most important for guarding a huge area bordering the Indian Ocean, which is also called a 'never-sinking aircraft carrier' (Choudhury, Moorthy, 2018: 308).

Since 2010, when India began to strengthen relations with regional organisations, such as ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, this has culminated in a free trade area between ASEAN member states and India in 2010–2011. India has interests in the South China Sea region because of its growing trade partnership with Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines. Apart from this, it wants to provide access for the regular use of the Indian navy. This kind of Indian initiative is a thorn in China's side. It is reciprocal that China needs access to the waters around India in the Indian Ocean region, and India has an interest in the waters around China (Hornat, 2015: 434). Moreover, unlike China, India has no problems with energy imports in the context of the 'Malacca Dilemma'; instead, its representatives imagine an analogue 'Hormuz Dilemma'. India's maritime doctrines and policy focus on the Red Sea and the South China Sea as a legitimate area of interest from the Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca, and the southern Indian Ocean as a secondary area of interest in the ocean (Erickson et al., 2010: 230).

The sea line of communication (SLOC) is widely protected by China in the Indo-Pacific region. There is an overwhelming strategic policy adopted by China in this area to support the transport of energy. The Indian Ocean is a key chokepoint in the region, where 40 per cent of China's imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz and enter the Persian Gulf. Around 82 per cent of China's oil imports go through the Malacca Strait to Southeast Asia (Brewster, 2014: 136). However, the debacle for India in the 1962 Sino-Indian War forced New Delhi to do something rational at an international level. India sought US support to strengthen the Himalayan border (the Line of Actual Control) with China. That is why India signed a treaty with the USA to get modern technology and arms for the Indian army. India shifted its defence policy to a continental-level security agenda (Baruah, Joshi, 2020: 40). Although the Indian strategy has moved toward the Western powers since 1962, Russia remains a reliable strategic partner of India, and has been supplying 70 per cent of India's military equipment. During China's aggression in 1962 against India, Prime Minister Nehru requested the US President Kennedy to send air assistance to India. A US aircraft carrier rushed at full speed towards India to the Bay of Bengal. The US 7th fleet was in action mode in the Indian Ocean to support the Indian navy. It was an effective deterrence against China's naval activity in South Asia and the Pacific region (National Archives of India, 1965).

India realises and acknowledges the differences between strategic alignment and a natural alliance, because time is needed to focus on a multi-alignment strategy. India understands that Western countries have modern defence capabilities. This is beneficial for the Indian armed forces to counter opponent countries' military doctrine in the region (Ministry of External Affairs, 2019). In recent years, US-India defence co-operation has accelerated to achieve a balance of power and India's emergence in South Asia as a regional power. India has a potential market with growing purchasing power because of its growing economy. India is intending to maintain power in Asia with its relationship with the USA and other Western powers. This relationship is helping India combat international terrorism, illegal cross-border incursions, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. US-India defence cooperation has grown, and is not limited to purchasing only arms. This defence cooperation includes professional education and exercises for the armed forces, and encompasses dialogue, defence sales and practical cooperation (The White House, 2010b).

3. Defence deal and trade

In the Kargil War, the Indian air force and army needed modern military equipment, and informed the government. India decided to purchase modern weather-friendly aircraft and choppers under the security deal between both countries. It successfully purchased lots of military arms from the USA, for example, INS Jalashwa, multi-mission maritime aircraft (eight Boeing P8-I), three Boeing 737 business jets, ten Boeing C-17 Globemasters, and six Super Hercules aircraft. Between 1999 and 2010, India purchased 25 billion USD worth of military equipment from the USA (Bishoyi, 2011: 68). In November 2010, US President Barack Obama visited New Delhi to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to expand and strengthen the bilateral strategic partnership. Both leaders signed an agreement worth approximately ten billion USD, and

20 commercial agreements (Narain, 2010). India's defence deals are projected to be around 50 billion USD by 2022 (Bedi, Spencer, 2008).

India has been suffering huge problems from terrorist activity, and recurring cross-border terrorism on the northern border of the country. Since the 1990s, thousands of innocent people have been killed by this activity, and many cities have been bombed. During the US president's visit to India in July 2010, an agreement was signed for the settlement of counter-terrorism initiatives by both governments. The two leaders criticised all forms of terrorist activity, and both sides also agreed to share information on terrorist activities and deepen operational cooperation, capacity building, and technology transfer on counter-terrorism (The White House, 2010a). From 2013 to 2016, Indian signed 13 arms contracts, worth 37 billion USD, a deal which surpasses Russia. However, Russia has been a traditional defence partner of India since the 1960s. India successfully included US defence in the services, i.e. Harpoon missiles, Apache and Chinook helicopters, and M777 ultra-light howitzers. India has decided to purchase more defence systems from the USA. The Indian Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) is the highest decision-making body for defence deals, which is clearing the purchase of 127mm-calibre guns. Apart from these deals, India is willing to purchase fifth-generation aircraft for the Indian navy and air force (Behera, Balachandran, 2018, 339).

Table 1. The various defence trade between the USA and India

Year	Defence equipment	Quantity in number	Service	USD in billion
2008	Super Hercules C-130J	6	air force	1
2009	P8I Poseidon Long Range Maritime Patrol	8	navy	2.1
2010	AGM-84I Harpoon Block II missiles	24	air force	0.170
2011	C-17 Globemaster-III transport aircraft	10	air force	4.1
2011	MK-54 all-up-round lightweight torpedoes	32	navy	0.086
2012	Super Hercules C-130J military planes	6	air force	1
2012	AGM-84L Harpoon Block II missiles	21	air force	0.200
2015	AH-64E Apache helicopters	22	air force	2.1
2015	CH-47F (I) Chinook helicopters	15	air force	0.900
2016	M777 Howitzer guns	145	army	0.732
2016	Super Hercules C-130J military transport planes	1	air force	0.134
2016	P8I Anti-Submarine aircraft	4	navy	1.1
2019	Sig Sauer Assault Rifles	72,400	army	0.090
2020	Ah-64E Apache helicopters	6	army	0.930
2020	MH-60 Romeo Seahawk helicopters	24	navy	2.1

Source: Author's compilation, US Embassy in India (December 2016), Defence World (August 2016), Deccan Herald (February 2020).

4. Results and discussion

China and Pakistan have a joint defence programme to build aircraft and missiles. India has security issues on the border with China and Pakistan. China's policy is to restrict every Indian position in the South Asian region through its encirclement approach, also called the 'String of Pearls'. In contrast, China is in a disadvantageous position in comparison with the power of the US-India alliance in the Indo-Pacific region. The Indian Ocean region is far from China's connectivity, and there is a longer distance from the South China Sea to the Malacca Strait (IOR). The Malacca chokepoint could be blocked by the USA, it is a fear for China

in the event of a future crisis between the two sides. China has a strategy to expand its naval capabilities in the Indian Ocean region (Lobo, 2021: 78).

Furthermore, China has a policy and a strategy of expanding its geographical presence from South Asia to Southeast Asia and Pacific countries, increasing its geographical nexus in South Asia in the context of the Silk Road expansion for its political, economic and strategic interests. China is constructing the CPEC and its presence in the Gwadar Port in Pakistan, the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, the Chittagong Port in Bangladesh, and a naval base in Myanmar. The Chinese are actively involved in the Bay of Bengal, and are laying the foundations of a canal across the Kra Isthmus in Thailand. Thus, China has a heavy military presence in Cambodia, with mutual agreement and a strategic build-up and military presence in the South China Sea (Mohan, 2012b; Mohan, Abraham, 2020). Using the hard and soft power of Chinese diplomacy to strengthen its position around the world, this is useful for strategic cooperation with global partners to expedite trade, the economy, arms sales and humanitarian aid. In recent years, China has been attracting oceanic countries, such as Mauritius, the Seychelles and Djibouti. Apart from this, China is working extensively in the area of the Horn of Africa. Djibouti is the focal point for Chinese connectivity in East African countries (Blanchard, 2017).

As part of China's strategy to dominate the world, the Chinese president Xi Jinping launched his flagship project called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is spreading across the world rapidly in South Asia, Central Asia, Africa and Europe. A Chinese goods train runs from Beijing to Warsaw via Belgrade and the Balkan region. China launched the '17+1' framework for deeper economic engagement with 17 Central and East European Countries (CEECs). China's maritime initiative is called the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI). Under this project, China is deeply involved with Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Maldives, Bangladesh and Myanmar, surrounding India in South Asia. China is strengthening the encirclement policy against India, and its various initiatives cement cooperation and its extensive strategy in the South Asia region (Bharti, 2022; Ploberger, 2017: 296). India's Neighbourhood First Policy is specifically designed for better connectivity in South Asian countries. But recently, in 2021, China recognised the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, while India favours democratic rule, peace and stability. Thus, China works diplomatically against India; and Chinese policy supports Pakistan in South Asia, because Pakistan is getting support from China in the United Nations (UN) for the protection of terrorists (China is openly supporting Pakistan-sponsored terrorist organisations).

China's growing foothold in the Indo-Pacific region is a major and challenging concern for India. In recent years, India has moved closer to the French in this region, and the United States is an important player. These countries work in collaboration in the Pacific region to counter other opposing powers. India has been successfully participating in naval exercises with the USA and the French in the Indo-Pacific region (Gurjar, 2020).

India is providing aid to Myanmar to build Sittwe Port, which would benefit India's northeast states. India is assisting Myanmar to open a trade route between both countries, and an alternative route to transport goods to its northeast states as well (Pant, 2014: 197). China has a deep connection at the continental level, and the BRI projects have strong ties with East African countries. Similarly, India has also strengthened its stance in economic and trade cooperation, mainly in South Africa, Madagascar and Mozambique. India has a naval presence in Mozambique, and a radar surveillance station in Madagascar. These initiatives support it in strengthening its position in the IOR (Gurjar, 2020).

India is assisting in building up an airstrip and jetty for strategic purposes. Thus, both island countries support India in Ocean politics (Mohan, 2018). India has expanded its maritime expansion from the South China Sea to Southeast Asian countries. China disputes the waters in the South China Sea where India has expanded its geographical presence. Thus, India is connecting its trade route in the deep Pacific and the Indian Ocean (Scott, 2013: 54). Sea lanes have become much more important to supporting the global economy, because maritime trade routes have 70 per cent of total business capabilities. If any kind of disturbance occurs in the sea lanes, it will drastically affect the international economy. This will also impact Asian stability, and the US position in the region will be affected. Thus, there is a need to focus on establishing proper security systems. Moreover, any form of disturbance in the Indo-Pacific region may severely impact the global economy, and it may also vitally affect international power projection (Green, Shearer, 2012: 177; Lou, 2012: 628).

The USA has been extending its support to its allies in the IOR and providing security assistance. As the largest economy in the world, the USA uses sea lanes in the Pacific region, and imports oil from the Persian Gulf to East Asia. India has huge support from the USA in the context of the exploitation of Pacific trade routes (Erickson et al., 2010: 218). There is a challenging sign to the US alliance by Chinese dominance over the sea. It is creating restrictions for the power of the USA and its allies in the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean region. The USA needs to play a safe game to provide a tussle-free zone in waters from Chinese maritime aggression (Lieberthal, Wang, 2012). Moreover, China's challenge is a major task for India and the USA, the Great Coco Islands are crucial points on important shipping lanes in the Pacific waters connecting the Strait of Malacca and the Bay of Bengal. This is the principal challenge, and a big factor in the Indian strategic radius (Jae-Hyung, 2002: 554; Khurana, 2008, 3).

China always threatens the forces of the United States, India and other countries that freely enter its controlled territories. It applies a policy of demoralising and undermining the USA and its close partners in the South China Sea and around Taiwan in Pacific diplomacy (Montgomery, 2014). This study shows that there is growing strategic cooperation between India and the USA. India is fully opposed to an inimical presence in the IOR, mainly opposing a presence near the South Asian neighbourhood. Because India feels that security is a big concern in the region, this is why India is against the presence of opposing powers that want to synchronise Indian business and trade routes across the ocean and land as well (Pattanaik, 2016).

Since the last decade, the South China Sea has been in a heated debate between the USA and China. China's assertiveness and military build-up are creating instability in the balance of power in the South China Sea (The Military Balance, 2019; 2021). The USA's involvement in Asia strengthens its presence and domination. The growing power of the USA in this region is creating regional stability. Thus, the United States is able to protect the security and the stability of regional allies in the Indo-Pacific (The White House, 2017). China has been using a method of providing loans easily to southern countries, and after some years, if the country is unable to pay them back, trying to seize a port in that country in return; for example, Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port is under Chinese control for 99 years. Hence, China's policy effectively restricts India's emergence in the South Asia region. Likewise, China is spreading its position heavily in the Pacific Ocean, and has a military presence in the first chain of islands. It stretches to Japan's archipelago in the South China Sea, and is spreading to the Philippines and Malaysia. China's presence is on the second island chain after the first there, and the US naval presence in the region faces challenges from the Chinese side. The US has a position there in the Northern Marianas, Carolinas, Guam and Palau (Scott, 2012: 96).

China continues to increase its military strength, and has spent a lot of money on modernisation. The USA is anxious about China becoming more hegemonic in the Asian region, and this is visible in China's 2018 National Defence Strategy. The Chinese authorities are continually increasing their military and economic ability, with a vision to dominating in the long term at a broad level in different parts of the world at every juncture. China is hard-heartedly trying to grab power in the Indo-Pacific region because of its global value to trade and business (US Department of Defense, 2018). US policymakers believe that China has been trying to displace the US position. In other words, China's assertive behaviour causes chaos to opposing groups in the entire region of the Pacific Ocean. Thus, with China's expansion in the Indo-Pacific region increasing its MSRI framework from Asia to Europe to Africa, these intercontinental initiatives will undermine the position of the US across the world in the near future. The USA and India have a mutual understanding and a common interest in cooperating in the area of security and trade in the Indo-Pacific region. The disputed region of the South China Sea indicates the principal challenges. India and the USA have a common incentive to use the sea lane for mutual benefit (Dutton, 2016: 11).

India is developing a strategic partnership with the USA, but there is a need for more trust on both sides, and to strengthen the bilateral relationship across the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region as well. Both countries have been involved in initiating multilateral cooperation and major initiatives in the region, for example, the Quad and Malabar exercises. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is a strategic mutual understanding on security in the Pacific region between Australia, India, Japan and the USA. This policy of four countries stands up to the aggression and threats of opposing countries in the Indo-Pacific region. It

is preserving the Pacific trade routes and breaking the monopoly of China in the region. The Quad countries claim that this model is supporting member countries' political and economic processes in the Indo-Pacific (Bharti, 2022, 104). There is another agreement between India and the USA in the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA); the purpose of this agreement is to provide confidential military intelligence output (BBC, 2020).

Conclusions

The study empirically points out that defence cooperation between the USA and India is gradually being shaped by both partners as a future bilateral strategic partnership. Since the Kargil War, India has been getting modern US defence systems. In recent years, there have been seven visits by US presidents to India. On the occasion of India's Republic Day, Barack Obama toured India for the second time as the chief guest. The Indian prime minister Narendra Modi is very enthusiastic about embracing the USA as a strategic partner of India. Modi visited the USA for the sixth time as a reliable partner, and successfully signed several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). During the tenure of President Donald Trump, the Indo-Pacific concept became a reality, and the USA supported India's engagement in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean region. The Indian army now has US defence equipment and modern arms. The sea lane, economic, security and defence are the key elements to strengthening bilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. The growing foothold of the Chinese in the Indo-Pacific, and its concept of the 'Strings of Pearls', are direct threats to India in South Asia. There is strong nexus between China and Pakistan, which has been creating enormous problems for India. This is the reason why India is supporting the USA and Western countries in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. The USA needs support from strong Asian countries, and India can fulfil its expectations in Asian politics. As the second largest population in the world, India is a big market with huge consumer potential.

Prime Minister Modi says that the USA and India are natural global partners. This partnership is emerging as more relevant in the digital world. There is even more need in our relationship for a far-reaching transformation full of enthusiastic waves. Modi stated that our partnership is crucial and increasingly important to the establishment of peace, prosperity and stability at a global level (Somander, 2015). In 2020, the Galwan Valley clash occurred between India and China, which opened Indian eyes to how China is threatening India. There have been security issues with India since its independence. China attacked India in 1962, and Pakistan was involved in a war with India in 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999. Thus, the Indian defence system has relied on Russia since the era of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). China has defence systems and fighter jets from Russia as well, which is why the Chinese are very aware of the Indian defence systems, and India has abandoned further big defence deals with Russia. India now relies on Western technology and defence systems. Further research suggests that India is positive about forming defence ties with the USA and other European partners. In the Ukraine War, the Russian defence system has been weak compared to that of the US. There have been huge losses in Russian defence in the Ukraine War, such as tanks, fighter jets, helicopters and missiles. This circumstance is problematic for India, because 70 per cent of Indian defence systems come from Russia. Finally, in conclusion, there is a need for further empirical and comparative research on India-US cooperation, and on the position of China in Asian politics and in the Indo-Pacific region as well.

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INDIJOS IR JUNGTTINIŲ AMERIKOS VALSTIJŲ STRATEGINĖ PARTNERYSTĖ BEI KINIJOS POLITIKOS POVEIKIS INDIJOS IR JAV ALJANSUI INDIJOS IR RAMIOJO VANDENYNŲ REGIONE

MUKESH SHANKAR BHARTI
Jawaharlal Nehru universitetas (Indija)

Santrauka

Šio tyrimo tikslas – nustatyti pagrindinius dvišalio Indijos ir JAV bendradarbiavimo metodus, kuo jie pagrįsti. Saugumo tikslais Indija Indijos ir Ramiojo vandenyno regione bei jos kaimynystėje remiasi Jungtinėmis Amerikos Valstijomis, nes jai kyla rimtų grėsmių dėl saugumo iš savo šiaurinės kaimynės Himalajų pasienyje. Tiriamas dvišalis abiejų šalių bendradarbiavimas. Keliamas klausimas, kodėl būtent JAV yra svarbesnė Indijai saugumo ir gynybos sektoriuose Pietų Azijoje bei Indijos ir Ramiojo vandenyno regione? Atliekant tyrimą taikomas empirinis metodas ir laikomasi analitinio požiūrio. Indijos ir JAV strateginė partnerystė puoselėjama teisingai, tad Indijos ir Ramiojo vandenyno regione šalių interesų konflikto nėra. Be to, šis tyrimas atskleidė, kad Indija vykdydama tarptautinę politiką turėtų pasiekti gerų bendradarbiavimo rezultatų Pietų Azijos kaimynystėje, taip apribojant aktyvų Kinijos dalyvavimą šiame regione.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *Indija, JAV, Kinija, Indijos ir Ramiojo vandenyno regionas, Pietų Azija, geopolitika, saugumas.*

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