



**INSTITUTE OF  
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

**web:** [www.issi.org.pk](http://www.issi.org.pk)  
**phone:** +92-920-4423, 24  
**fax:** +92-920-4658

## Issue Brief

# Growing US-India Military Collaboration

**Najam Rafique**, Director (Research), ISSI

December 01, 2016

For over a decade now, the US has been investing in a long-term strategic partnership with India. In March 2016, the US Congress approved H.R. 4825, better known as the US-India Defence Technology and Partnership Act that seeks to institutionalise the US-India security partnership.

The legislation seeks to elevate India to the same status as America's allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, as well as its other major treaty partners like Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Israel. According to Senator Mark Warner "As an important partner with a flourishing economy, India has huge potential as a market for American defense manufacturers."<sup>1</sup> The bill demonstrates the importance both sides now seem to be placing on strengthening defense ties across many areas: from increased strategic and regional cooperation, to deepened military-to-military exchanges, to expanded collaboration on defense technology and innovation.

The US-India Defense Technology and Partnership Act underlines the dramatic change in today's political environment. For India, access to advanced US weaponry and technology means that it can now pursue an aggressive military modernisation.

US and India have also agreed to broaden the scope of their Strategic and Commercial partnership under the new framework of the US-India defense relationship. The priorities for the coming year in defense ties, as well as specific steps both sides will take to pursue those priorities will include expanding collaboration under the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) by setting up five new joint working groups on: naval systems; air systems, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; chemical and biological protection; and other systems; increase 'Make in India' efforts of Government of India; explore new opportunities to deepen cooperation in maritime security and maritime domain awareness in support of the India-US Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region and the maritime security objectives; military-to-military relations; and expand knowledge partnership in the field of defense and regional and international security matters of mutual interest.<sup>2</sup> The US, it seems, has not only opened all its military and technology doors to India, but has also encouraged Israel and other allies to do so as well. For the past eight years, India has been the world's largest arms importer, buying over \$100 billion in weapons each year, two-thirds of which are deployed against

---

<sup>1</sup> "US-India Defence Cooperation Act Introduced in Senate", *The Economic Times*, May 11, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> "US-India Joint Statement on the Visit of Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar to the US", *US Dept. of Defence*, Press Release No. NR-306-16, August 29, 2016.

Pakistan. Moreover, US military and political support encourages India in its bellicose behaviour towards Pakistan and China.

The US growing tilt towards India must be seen in the context of limited convergence of interest with Pakistan and the new administration that will be taking over the White House in January 2017. The silence by the US over increased violations by India across the Line of Control and the Working Boundary, as well as its brutal campaign of repression in Kashmir points to the fact that it might be willing to overlook these transgressions by India in the light of its growing alliance partnership with India. Pressure has even been exerted on China not to transfer advanced weaponry and technologies to Pakistan.

Worse, the US appears to be encouraging closer ties between India and the GCC states, especially Saudi Arabia, which Modi's visited recently. There may be an Iranian gambit as well. Given India's close relations with Iran and informal US-Iranian cooperation against the militant Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, collaboration between the US, India and Iran to 'stabilise' Afghanistan cannot be ruled out.

Unless this dynamic is changed, Pakistan's capabilities for conventional defence and nuclear deterrence against India could be significantly eroded.

Seen in this perspective, the US alliance with India has negative implications for Pakistan's security. Although there may be rough times ahead in the relationship with the US, Pakistan's diplomacy will have to be both dynamic and imaginative.

Along with a diplomatic offensive, Pakistan's military response too must also be well-calibrated and considered in order to meet these adverse developments. At the military level, Pakistan must ensure a defensive and asymmetrical capability, including the credibility of its nuclear deterrence, that would preserve its ability to deter any conventional Indian military adventures. Pakistan's missile capabilities must be multiplied along with ensuring the availability of anti-aircraft and ballistic missile defence systems. On the sea, while it may not be possible to go in for the expensive option of an aircraft carrier, Pakistan would need to upgrade and add to its submarines, fast missile boats, as well as anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

Strategic cooperation with China, and expanding military and diplomatic cooperation with Russia will remain critical. Just as the US is willing to share cutting-edge military technologies with India, China and

Russia must be cultivated to share their most advanced weapons systems with Pakistan, including nuclear submarines, stealth aircraft, and anti-aircraft carrier missiles. Russian weapons systems such as the S300 anti-ballistic missile and the SU-31 fighter-bomber are among the best in class.

Red lines would also need to be drawn in Afghanistan. Pakistan must impress upon the international community that no Indian military presence or use of Afghan territory for subversion against Pakistan will be tolerated. In all likelihood, the chaos in Afghanistan may be prolonged and Pakistan must make all efforts to continue to support inter-Afghan dialogue. Fostering an understanding with Iran and rebuilding a close relationship with Saudi Arabia is also essential for restraining Indian penetration in the Gulf.

Most important of all, China will remain a critical country whose cooperation is vital to ensure regional stability as Pakistan and China work to strengthen regional connectivity through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.