



India-US relations

Description

History :-

- U.S.A was the supporter of India's independence from the time of World War 2. U.S.A saw India more diplomatically valuable than Pakistan, but because of India's non-alignment policy, U.S.A started developing relations with Pakistan and made it a "Central Treaty Organization Ally" in 1954. This made India cultivate strategic and military relations with the Soviet Union.
- Still for a dozen of years after independence U.S.A provided aid of 1.7 billion dollars including 931 million dollars in food. U.S.A also helped India in Sino-Indian war, 1962 with ammunition, arms and clothing supply.
- But after President Kennedy, Indo-US relations deteriorated exponentially, and by the time Richard Nixon became President U.S left its neutral position in Indo-Pak tensions and shifted towards Pakistan.
- In 1974, India conducted their first nuclear test the "Smiling Buddha" which was opposed by the USA. By the 1980s relations improved gradually and the USA provided huge technical assistance in fields of electronics, aviation and communication.
- When Atal Bihari Vajpayee became Prime Minister he gave a green light to nuclear weapons testing in Pokharan which was heavily opposed by the Clinton government and India was subjected to umpteen number of sanctions and embargos except for food.
- Japan also supported the USA's move. India still went ahead with the development and the sanctions were soon lifted.

Economics :-

- India and The USA have a bilateral trade of 74.5 billion dollars. The USA has a trade deficit of 21 billion dollars with India.
- India being USA's ninth largest goods trading partner.
- But with the failed free trade negotiations and with present US government's "America First Policy", USA's decision to withdraw import duty benefits to about 2,000 Indian

goods under its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme, we can see a declining trade surplus.

- The USA also claims that it is not getting a fair Indian market share and import duty relaxations with its increasing amount of exports.
- India claims that the USA is not acknowledging India's steps to reduce the trade deficit as India for the first time in 2018 imported oil and gas from the USA worth 4 billion dollars.
- If USA plans to go ahead and revokes India's Preferential Trade status, India is planning to impose higher import duties to 29 of the items imported from USA which will put an extra burden of 290 million dollars per year on the USA.

Defence and Security :-

A top Pentagon commander recently said that India-USA defence sales are at an all-time high. USA has been supplying us aircraft for the navy (P-8I) and air force (C-17 Globemaster, Hercules C-130J, Apache and Chinook Helicopters). In July the USA started delivering M777 Howitzers for the Indian Army.

We have also signed two agreements with USA namely :-

- COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement): It will facilitate access to advanced defence systems and enable India to optimally utilize its existing U.S.-origin platforms.
- LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement): LEMOA gives access, to both countries, to designated military facilities on either side for the purpose of refuelling and replenishment. India can access all the bases of the USA stationed worldwide for logistical support and so can the USA.

In the recent 2+2 dialogue defence ministers of both the countries acknowledged the role of technology and agreed to encourage and prioritize co-production and co-development projects through the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI).

Military exercise participation :-

- Yudh Abhyas: Annual Combat exercise between Indian and American armies.
- Malabar: Started in 1992, an annual naval exercise between India and USA. Japan joined in 2015.
- Cope India: Exercises between IAF and USAF.
- Red Flag: India has participated a couple of times in this exercise. Its an aviation exercise conducted by the USAF in Nebraska several times a year with NATO and other allied countries.

Diplomacy :-

- From the time of independence itself, the USA has had an inclination towards Pakistan. It also supported Pakistan in 1971 Indo-Pak War. The USA supplied military aid and monetary aid for a long time to Pakistan. Though the Trump administration has started to cut military aids to Pakistan because of Pakistan's unwillingness to act on terrorism.

- USA's support to India is also a part of their strategy to deal with China. China's continued progress in military and technology and expansion in the Indian Ocean bothers both India and USA. So the USA is using the strategy of bringing the like-minded democracies together, and with the help of India is trying to keep a check on China.
- In 2018 India got waiver under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), which has averted the standoff between the two countries, as India was reluctant to buy S400 Triumf missiles from Russia and import oil from Iran. Under CAATSA USA had declared that those countries keeping trade relations with Russia, Iran and North Korea will have to deal with heavy sanctions by the USA. But the USA has not renewed the waiver and India is most likely to stop importing oil from Iran from the month of May.

Conclusion :-

India USA relations have been through constant ups and downs, and there always have been positive and negative sides for India irrespective of the USA President in power. What we should focus on is keeping our sovereignty intact and try to have good relations with our neighbours as much as possible.

Though there may be many merits in being close to the USA, we should never forget Russia's contributions right from the time of independence. Also, we were on good terms with Iran and Iran was supplying oil to us at cheaper rates. India as said earlier that we only take the UN sanctions seriously and we should be firm on this stand of ours and work out some way with the USA to continue our relations with Iran which would also not make us look weak on the international platform.

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