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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Defence cooperation, Indo-US strategic partnership, regional stability, security dilemma, South Asian security, strategic autonomy	The aim of the present paper to study the impact of Indo-US strategic partnership in South Asian security, balance of power and regional stability. The discussion revolved around defence collaboration, maritime security, and tech cooperation, along with China and Pakistan's strategic approaches. The researchers employed a qualitative research design using secondary data which was acquired through academic journal articles, books, policy documents, and official documents from institutions. Thematic analysis was applied to a purposive sample of the 30 sources of documentary evidence selected for the analysis. Findings indicate approval of Indo – US cooperative efforts because they – created opportunities for military cooperation of both countries, deepened India's strategic importance in the Indo – Pacific, and enhanced India's defence capabilities. The China-Pakistan partnership is also very important in regional security and has sparked both official and unofficial fears regarding strategic rivalry. This is true that increased defence cooperation contributes to strengthening the overall security environment, this can also exacerbate the regional security dilemma as other regional states see this development as threat. India's drive for its own right to strategic autonomy restricts the extent of cooperation with the US, pointing towards a pathway of flexible strategic cooperation and not outright military alliances. The changing dynamics of security ties in the region are therefore a balance between the deterrence, strategic autonomy and issues of regional power competition. The findings of the study revealed that Indo-US relationship has brought both opportunities and challenges for the security of South Asia. Balanced strategic rivalry and diplomacy strategic rivalry crisis management confidence building measures and regional deliberations for its role in favour of securing long-term regional peace and stability.
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Introduction

The strategic partnership among India as well as the United States is now an important issue within international relations, especially in South Asia. Defense, trade, technology, maritime security and regional issues have seen improved cooperation between the two countries over the years. The relationship between the two countries has deepened, as both seek to uphold their national interest and respond to changes within the international system. India has strengthened its relations with the United States to enhance its military capabilities, access advanced technology, and play a larger role in global affairs (Medcalf, 2018; Pant & Joshi, 2016).

India and the United States are increasing their ties, which has implications for China and Pakistan. The two countries keenly watch these developments and accordingly fine-tune policies based on their security concerns. China's rise in military and economic strength has impacted regional security dynamics, and the enhanced military ties between India and the United States have further bolstered India's military and diplomatic capabilities. The region's states are advancing their modernization initiatives, smashing new diplomatic grounds and strengthening partnerships in their attempt to advance their national interests. India and the United States have been cooperating in the sectors of maritime security, defence technology, joint military exercises and regional security discussions. These activities provide new ground for cooperation as well as pose problems of regional competition, deterrence and power balance (Mohan, 2012; Pant & Joshi, 2016).

Background of the Study

The enlightenment provided by the history of India-US relations helps in understanding the ongoing strategic partnership. India adopted the policy of non-alignment and had close relations with the USSR during the 'Cold War' period. At the same time, the United States developed strong ties with Pakistan. The various steps taken in the foreign policy area made it hard for India and the United States to establish a close relationship. There was also a growing interest in the United States to develop long-term relations with India and due to the rise in India's significance for Asian affairs. This is not an agreement on all strategic objectives, but an understanding of national interests. The political stance and foreign policy preferences differ, both nations appreciated the benefits of collaboration in certain fields (Mohan, 2012; Pant & Joshi, 2016).

Defence cooperation between India and US has emerged as a key thrust of the two nation's strategic partnership. The two nations have stepped up cooperation on military exercises, defence technology and maritime security, as well as exchange defence information. These have enhanced relations with their military and fostered greater opportunities for collaboration in regard to regional security concerns. Their strategic thinking also has put India's Indo-Pacific region into the spotlight. The two countries believe in maritime security, freedom of navigation, regional connectivity and Asia's power balance. They are not

allies in the sense of agreeing on all matters/entering a formal military pact. They still collaborate each other based on mutual national interests in their cooperation in development. These relations also enhance the possibilities of coattention and boost insecurity and competition threats in the region (Medcalf, 2018; Pant & Joshi, 2016).

The India-US strategic partnership has implications beyond their bilateral relations. It also has an impact on the security issues of the Asian countries including China and Pakistan. But as China becomes more influential in the region and is getting closer to Pakistan's strategic relationship, these concerns have grown further. Pakistan sees India's military development and its cooperation with the United States in the militant context of its historic rivalry with India. The activities of other countries' military forces may be viewed as a threat, regardless of whether they warmly endorse the activities under the guise of strengthening national security. This can lead to lack of trust and more military development. The problem can be understood with the help of the concept of the Security Dilemma. It refers to the resulting "fear" a nation may instill in other nations with the implementation of measures to protect itself, which may result in other nations taking similar measures. This study has studied the impact of India-US strategic partnership on the power dynamics in the region and what implications it had on Pakistan's security concerns and its opportunities and threats to the region for stability.

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the evolution and key contours of Indo-US strategic partnership and its impact on the shift in South Asian security.
2. To analyse the impact of Indo-US strategic cooperation on the formation of power balances with a particular focus on China as well as Pakistan's and India's strategic reaction, including attempts to demonstrate strategic autonomy.
3. To explore the consequences of the Indo-US strategic partnership and its trajectory for South Asia's regional stability, strategic deterrence, security dilemmas and an opening for peaceful cooperation in South Asia.

Research Questions

- Q1. What impact has Indo-US strategic partnership had on the evolving South Asian security landscape?
- Q2. How did the growing Indo-US strategic cooperation affect the new power dynamics and the Chinese and Pakistani strategic responses?
- Q3. How has the Indo-US strategic partnership helped ease regional tensions or create new challenges of strategic competition and security dilemmas in South Asia?

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it examined the relationship between great power competition, strategic alliances, and South Asian regional stability. It viewed the India-US strategic partnership to a wider local perspective instead of just the interests of both countries. It also explored the effects of this relationship on the security worries of the neighboring countries or the balance of authority in the region. This study helped bring new ideas into the international debates on international relations, strategic studies and regional security by relating concepts of a defence cooperation, new alignments of emerging powers, strategic autonomy and security dilemma with a unified concept. It also offered an understanding of how international affairs of the rising India and threat perceptions of Pakistan and Chinese calculations in the region have changed. The results can contribute to addressing issues to the policy community about the link between deterrence, military modernization, diplomatic interaction, and crisis management. The study also highlighted the desirability of confidence building measures, exchanges of views among the regional nations and cooperative arrangements for security in the region to mitigate the potential risks of strategic competition. The study analyzed not only the positive aspects but also the potential drawbacks of Indo-US strategic collaboration to make an informed judgment on the circumstances where such partnerships can be a force for regional peace, while ensuring that it does not exacerbate rivalry between the two countries.

Literature Review

The existing literature on the Indo-US strategic partnership noted how bilateral relations are changing from historical differences to parallel development of cooperation in the four areas of cooperation – defence, technology, diplomacy and regional security. Mann (2024) describes how their common interest subdivided them into a closer partnership, but divergent country preferences meant there was a lack of strategic convergence. Lou (2024) examined the scope of defence cooperation, ranging from laying the groundwork for such ties and technology transfer to joint research and military interoperability. The results indicated that the cooperation was extended up to the point of its mutual benefits when the cooperation was made stronger between the struggling two countries. The learning institutions and the military have a partnership structure through the important studies of the learning.

The second area of literature revolved around India-US cooperation and the increasing role of China in the Indo-Pacific. Medcalf (2018) argues that changes in the regional balance of power affect the way countries perceive security and take decisions on foreign policy. The deepening partnership among India and the United States demonstrates their common interests in stability in the region, maritime security and a balance of power within the Indo-Pacific. China's increasing power has become a major factor in relations between countries in the region.

The subsequent research examined how shifting regional power dynamics affected Pakistan, particularly its national security priorities and foreign policy decisions. The possible effect of closer strategic partnership between India as well as the United States on regional balance of authority was discussed by Farooq et al. (2018). Their work pointed to possible implications of this partnership for the security of South Asia. Hussain et al. (2026) investigated the difficulties that Pakistan faces in balancing its relations in China and the US. They talked about the security, economic and diplomatic pressures affecting Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan has to take these challenges into consideration in its response to closer India – US relations and increasing competition between great powers.

The South Asian Institute of Research (SAIR) further emphasized the opportunities and constraints of the India–US partnership within the framework of strategic autonomy and regional security. Vijayalakshmi (2018) investigated the evolution of India-US relations post Cold War, concentrating on diplomatic engagement, defense cooperation and shifts in common interests. Mann (2024) said that national interests and opinions regarding the international order remain able to shape interactions among the two countries. Working more closely with the United States is not an indication that India agrees with each American strategic objective. India is taking its own decisions as per its priorities.

The partnership has also increased in significance to Pakistan's regional maritime security as well as strategic interests. Studies on maritime security, India–Pakistan maritime relations, and the Indian Ocean have underlined the impact of naval developments on threat perceptions and defense planning. Khan and Khan (2026) discussed the India-US strategic cooperation throughout the Indo-Pacific from the Indian side. The present study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing the India–US strategic relationship as a source of more close strategic cooperation and as a potential source of an issue of security in South Asia.

Methodology

Design

The researcher used the qualitative research design for the analysis of Indo–US strategic partnership in the context of effect on South Asian security, formation of new power alignments and stability of the region. This research design was used to examine recent crises, their underlying causes, and how they unfolded over time.

Data Sources

Study's secondary sources of data include published academic journal articles, scholarly books and policy reports, official government reports and publications from known international research institutions. The research material for this study was found via ResearchGate, google scholar, journal database and the official institution websites. The selected sources placed emphasis on Indo–US defence cooperation,

China's footprint in the region, Pakistan's security concerns, Indo-Pacific strategy, and South Asian region peace and stability. The more recent papers published in relevant publications from 2016 to 2026, had a higher weight.

Sample and sample size

In the study, the researcher used purposive sampling method to select 30 secondary sources relevant to the study that were analyzed in detail. The researcher consulted books written by scholars, peer reviewed journals, policy report, formal documents that were directly related to my research objectives.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection technique used was a multiple-step or multi-stage process as it involves using search terms such as Indo-US strategic partnership, South Asia security, India-US defence cooperation, China-India strategic competition, Pakistan's security policy, and regional stability in critically analysing relevant publications. Academic studies were found using Google Scholar and ResearchGate and policy documents and strategic analysis were gained from official government institutions, and official institutional sites. Relevant publications were evaluated by the researcher on their title and abstract, or if full text was available, their text.

Data Analysis Technique

Documentary data collection techniques were used and data was organized, interpreted, and analyzed thematically. All the sources identified were examined to identify if there are any shared arguments, strategic gains and other conflicting readings of the Indo-US partnership. These themes covered the (1) defence cooperation and military modernisation; (2) developments of new powers in the region; (3) the security dilemma between India and Pakistan; and (4) the effects on regional stability. Comparing information received from different sources was carried out to see what is completely agree, disagree, and that which has not been studied. The data was then analysed to answer the 3 research questions.

Theoretical Framework

The study's main analytical framework was based on the concepts of balance of power and the security dilemma. To appreciate the steps states take to change the balance of power in their favour, the approach of 'balancing power' was adopted. The security dilemma was used to understand the dynamics of state security measures and their implications in terms of other neighbouring states' security concerns. The

viewpoints were helpful to analyze India's increasing cooperation with the United States, China's Regional reactions and Pakistan's strategic maneuvering.

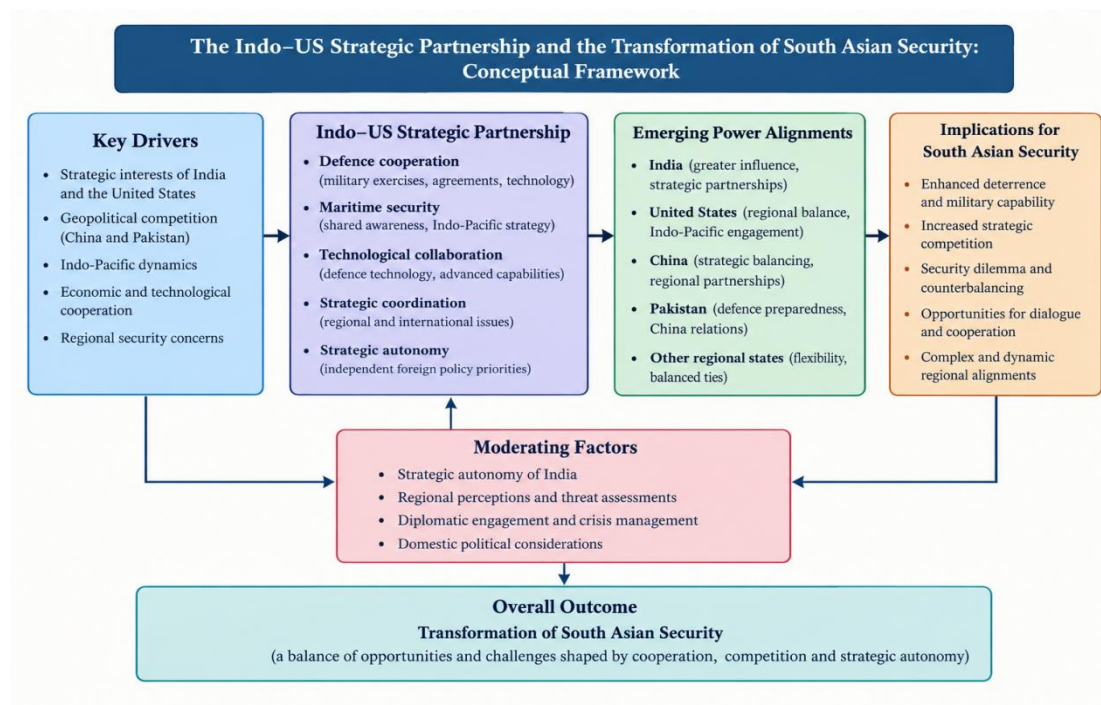


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework Model

Results and Analysis

Major Dimensions of the Indo-US Strategic Partnership

Table 1. Major Dimensions of the Indo-US Strategic Partnership and Their Security Implications

Dimension	Major findings from the literature	Implications for South Asian security
Defence cooperation	Expanded military exercises, defence agreements, and technology collaboration	Strengthened India's defence capabilities and strategic position
Maritime security	Greater coordination concerning maritime awareness and Indo-Pacific security	Improved cooperation while increasing strategic competition
Technological collaboration	Greater engagement in defence technology and advanced capabilities	Expanded India's military and technological opportunities

Strategic coordination	Greater alignment on selected regional and international issues	Influenced China's and Pakistan's strategic calculations
Strategic autonomy	India continued to maintain independent foreign policy priorities	Limited the extent of formal alignment between India and the United States

Table 1 indicates that defence cooperation has played a significant role in strengthening the strategic partnership between India and the United States. The increase of joint military exercises, defence related agreements, and military technology cooperation, the scope for cooperation between the two countries has also increased. The armed forces of the two countries with their men and women have worked together in joint exercises. The India's defence relations have been diversified while its defence preparedness has been enhanced. The security protocols between the countries and technological cooperation enhanced the bilateral engagement and increased India's weightage in the Indo Pacific region. These developments attracted the attention for China and other countries in the region and became a key consideration in their defense planning. India's emphasis on strategic autonomy also meant that closer ties with the United States would not come at the expense of its own national interests or eliminate differences among the two countries.

Emerging Power Alignments in South Asia

Table 2. Emerging Power Alignments and Regional Strategic Responses

Regional actor	Main strategic concern	Observed strategic implication
India	Defence modernisation and greater international influence	Expanded cooperation with the United States and strengthened strategic partnerships
United States	Regional balance of power and Indo-Pacific security	Increased strategic and defence engagement with India
China	Regional influence and the changing distribution of power	Greater importance of strategic balancing and regional partnerships
Pakistan	India's growing capabilities and regional strategic position	Continued emphasis on defence preparedness and relations with China
Other regional states	Maintaining security and diplomatic flexibility	Greater need to balance competing interests and partnerships

Table 2 shows the India-US agreement was wider implications for regional security. India's increasing proximity to the United States has brought access to defense technology, military cooperation and diplomatic support on international issues. In terms of balance of power and security issue of the seas, India plays an important role in Indo-Pacific. The Indo-US relationship has improved, which may have

consequences for the region and China's strategic assessment. The Pakistan army was looking at India's military build-up while simultaneously continuing to enhance ties with China. According to the analysis, the alignment of the two regions did not create two static and polarised blocks at all the times. The various regional states have not either abandoned the big game like the security and other economic diplomatic games. The discovery highlighted the necessity of diplomatic flexibility and communication in South Asia. The overlapping partnership and divergence of national interests processes of change in South Asian security has increased the relevance of diplomatic flexibility and South Asian dialogue for the region's security transformation process.

Implications for Regional Stability

Table 3. Stabilising and Destabilising Effects of the Indo-US Strategic Partnership

Analytical dimension	Potential stabilising effect	Potential destabilising effect
Deterrence	Increased military preparedness could discourage hostile actions	Greater military capabilities could encourage countermeasures
Defence cooperation	Improved coordination could strengthen responses to shared threats	Other states could perceive cooperation as containment
Regional power balance	Partnerships could discourage unilateral coercion	Competing alignments could intensify geopolitical rivalry
India-Pakistan relations	External diplomatic engagement could support crisis management	Strategic asymmetry could increase mistrust and insecurity
Regional diplomacy	Cooperation could encourage dialogue on shared security issues	Conflicting strategic priorities could limit regional consensus

Table 3 shows that India-US cooperation can enhance regional security by increasing deterrence, extending military cooperation and enhancing maritime coordination. But modifications to nuclear policies may result in different effects. Some security experts say nuclear deterrence might prevent aggression, and countries can work together to meet common security threats. The similar situations may raise worries on the part of China and Pakistan that India's growing capacities could be a threat to them. According to the findings, regional stability management needs a 'management of strategic competition' as to manage and monitor of diplomatic communication, confidence building measures and crisis-management arrangements. The regional collaboration of the two forces was an opportunity to enhance the security of the region.

Relationship Between Strategic Autonomy and Regional Security

Table 4. Strategic Autonomy and Its Implications for Regional Security

Aspect	Findings	Regional implications
Independent foreign policy	India retained flexibility in its international relationships	Limited the development of a fully integrated alliance
Defence diversification	India pursued cooperation with multiple international partners	Expanded strategic options but complicated alignment patterns
Cooperation with the United States	Shared interests encouraged closer engagement	Strengthened India's position in the Indo-Pacific
Relations with other powers	India continued to consider its wider diplomatic and economic interests	Created opportunities for engagement beyond a single strategic bloc

According to the results in table 4, strategic autonomy continues to be an important aspect of Indian Foreign policy. India was building the U.S.-India relationship but was still thinking of India's interests in global decision making. As a result, India collaborated with foreign nations for co-development of defence technologies. It was one such engagement of interests that was mutually selected; political; military. As national priorities have evolved, Indo-US relations might change, and it is important to bring states neighbouring China in. According to the analysis interpreted, it was inferred that India's stand on the foreign policy would ensure flexibility in its action. The influence of autonomy on opportunities and constraints impacting the partnership's influence on regional security applies more broadly, which is important for understanding the bigger picture of the partnership's implications.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Indo-US strategic partnership is proving to be a significant factor in the South Asian security landscape in the field of defence, maritime and technology cooperation. These developments strengthened India's military capabilities and expanded its strategic reach across the Indo-Pacific region. The findings of Joshi (2024) depict the multifaceted nature of India-US defence cooperation, which has grown in various dimensions, such as military exercises, defence technology, and information sharing. Khurshid's (2025) research on foundational defence pledges, similarly points to the linkages between increased defence cooperation and India's attempt to remain strategic. The developments reveal that two parties are not in full agreement on all international issues and thus the relationship is of a strategic interest.

The second finding is about the connection between strategic cooperation and regional rivalry. The growing Indo-US. ties, as part of the realignment of regional balance of power particularly since the

emergence of greater influence by China. The Washington approach's primary advantages are the opportunity of getting sophisticated weaponry and improving their military capabilities for India. The role of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific is crucial, and India plays an important role in defending the Indo-Pacific alliance. These developments may heighten concerns in China and Pakistan about shifting regional power dynamics and their potential implications for future security and strategic stability. In South Asia, China-India strategic rivalry impacts on security and poses a challenge for smaller South Asian states, Rehman (2024) adds. Ballesteros Peiró (2023) addresses that the impact of competition between China and India, along with that of China and Pakistan on the foreign policy calculations of other South Asian states. The present study finds that emerging power arrangements pose both prospects of cooperation and threats of increased strategic competition, which can be explained by the following arguments.

The third key challenge is the problem of security and a new security dilemma, evolving from the growing defense force and strategic alliances. The findings show that Defence cooperation can be a tool to strengthen deterrence by making military readiness more effective, increasing military intelligence sharing and enhance military operational coordination. However, other nations may consider the advances as a threat and try to counter by strengthening their military and defence forces. This great power rivalry in the region and India-Pakistan rivalry is a major reason for security issues in the region, states Ali (2024). More recent evidence on arms transfers also clearly reveals the military aspect of this competition. According to George et al. (2025), during 2020-2024, India and Pakistan continued to be the two largest importers of armaments, with China supplying large quantity of armaments for Pakistan. They reiterate their argument that regional security should be measured as having military benefits for India and the United States. The regional and regional implications also depend on how the regional government will respond to the events either through dissuasion or military expansion or via diplomacy and what interpretation the two regional powers, China and Pakistan, given to them.

The findings also demonstrated the significance of strategic autonomy within constraining the India-US partnership. Trade as well as cooperation are important for both countries, but their objectives in the Indo-Pacific perform not always align. India still maintains relations with various major powers and wants flexibility in defense purchases, diplomatic decisions and reactions to international conflicts. The Indo-US cooperation in a number of areas has grown, strategic autonomy and multi-alignment has tempered the potential for Indo-US ties as suggested by Abraham and Purushothaman (2024). Khurshid (2024) looks at the nature and importance of foundational defence cooperation and its implications for better bilateral cooperation, but also questions the autonomy of the Indian country in strategic decision making.

The results indicate that the regional security is hinged on the dynamics of deterrence, competition and diplomatic interaction. International security cooperation can play a role in mitigating the perceived benefits of aggression but the hierarchy of defence preparedness is not a solution to enduring conflicts and

cannot build confidence. The regional military capabilities analysis undertaken by Wezeman et al. (2024) provides a broader overview of the military capabilities of the region, while the newly released SIPRI analysis shows that in 2021–2025, India and Pakistan continued to be the two leaders of the list of arms recipients worldwide (George et al., 2026). The above trends show the significance of the topic of military modernization, paralleled by confidence building and crisis management. The present research suggests that the communication and predictable Indo–USA engagement for marine security, the Indo–USA partnership can contribute towards stability in the region.

Conclusion

The research examined the Indo–US strategic partnership and its effect on the security of South Asia. The findings shows that the partnership has contributed to strengthening India's defence and bolstering its strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific. It also added to the regional security concerns of China and Pakistan as well as other regional countries along with the power competition with the regional powers. The research suggests that military development may strengthen deterrence; it could also intensify the security dilemma if other countries perceive these developments as threats to their national interests. India's rejection of military commitments and its adherence to the policy of strategic autonomy were indicative of the flexibility of the partnership. The collaboration between Indo–US provided opportunities and challenges for stability in the region. Sustainable peace in South Asia is a long haul through responsible defense cooperation, effective crisis management and regular diplomatic engagement. Countries within the region also have to develop trust and keep communication open. dialog and cooperation can contribute to reducing tensions, clearing up misunderstandings and preventing conflicts. These measures are essential for maintaining stability in the region and preventing mistrust between neighboring states.

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