

2+2 TALKS: US SAYS IT STANDS WITH INDIA IN EFFORTS TO DEFEND ITS SOVEREIGNTY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - USA

China's military belligerence in eastern Ladakh and Indo-Pacific region figured prominently during the third edition of the 2+2 strategic dialogue between India and the US

NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday announced a deepening of ties across the spectrum with the US but stopped short of a formal alliance with Washington as both sides signed a key strategic pact allowing the sharing of satellite gathered real time intelligence.

A joint statement released after the third India-US [2+2 talks](#) – between the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries -- spoke of reinforcing ties in health against the backdrop of the covid-19 pandemic, supply chain resilience, in the maintenance of a free and open Indo-Pacific, defence and defence innovation, counter terrorism, energy, space, cyber security and education.

'The Ministers looked forward to the conclusion of an overarching MoU between India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including their component agencies and departments, to enhance health cooperation, including on health emergencies and pandemics, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases, and biomedical research and innovation," the statement said.

On the "Quad" that brings together India, US, Australia and Japan, the statement said that four ministers "welcomed the fact that these consultations would now be held annually. They expressed their support for further strengthening Quad cooperation through expanded activities, including initiating a dialogue among the development organizations of partner countries," it said.

The centerpiece of the visit was however the signing of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) that will allow sharing of high-end military technology, geospatial maps and classified satellite data between Indian and US militaries. The data will allow India to map precise enemy positions during any potential border conflict, say analysts.

The pact comes as India is engaged in a tense military standoff with China. That US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defence Mark Esper traveled to New Delhi in person at the time of the covid-19 pandemic and amid India's military standoff with China for the 2+2 talks is seen as a signal of the warmth New Delhi now shares with Washington.

"By signing the last of the four so-called foundational agreements, India has formally become a close defense partner of the US. Making this 'soft alliance' meaningful in practice will be more challenging, given that the US military normally collaborates with treaty-based allies," Brahma Chellany, analyst with the New Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research think tank said in a Twitter post. He was referring to pacts India and the US have signed before including a logistics support pact and another to procure specialised equipment for encrypted communications for US origin military platforms.

In his remarks at the end of the talks, foreign minister S. Jaishankar underlined the growing convergences between New Delhi and Washington.

"The 2+2 dialogue has a pol-mil (political-military) agenda that underlines our close bilateral

relationship. Our national security convergences have obviously grown in a more multi-polar world. We meet today to not only advance our own interests but to ensure that our bilateral cooperation makes a positive contribution in the world arena," Indian foreign minister S. Jaishankar said in his remarks at the end of the 2+2 talks.

In a not-so-subtle message to China, Jaishankar said: "the Indo-Pacific region was a particular focus of our talks."

"We reiterated the importance of peace, stability and prosperity for all countries in this region," he said in a possible reference to tensions triggered by China's aggressive behavior in the South China Sea, East China Sea and the Taiwan Straits besides India's own border standoff with China. "As Raksha Mantri (Defence Minister Rajnath Singh) stated, this is possible only by upholding the rules based international order, ensuring the freedom of navigation in the international seas, promoting open connectivity and respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states," he said. "A multi-polar world must have a multi-polar Asia as its basis," Jaishankar added pointedly, seen as a sign that New Delhi would not accept Chinese hegemony or aggression.

Pompeo and Esper named China in their comments with the former referring to the violent clash between Indian and Chinese troops in Ladakh on 15 June. "The US will stand with India as they confront threats to their sovereignty and to their liberty," Pompeo said.

"The challenge of the pandemic that came from Wuhan also fed into discussions about the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)," he said. "Our leaders and our citizens see with increasing clarity that the CCP is no friend to democracy, the rule of law, transparency, the freedom of navigation and free open and prosperous Indo-Pacific," Pompeo added.

Esper in his comments said that the US India partnership was more important in the context of a world that was confronted by a global pandemic and growing security challenges.

"Based on our shared values and common interest, we stand shoulder to shoulder in support of a free and open Indo Pacific for all. Particularly in the face of increasing aggression and destabilising activities by China," he said.

Singh on his part noted that India and the US had agreed to station Indian officers in the US Central Command overseeing operations in the Central Asia and Pakistan as well as the US Africa Command besides increasing the scope and complexities of bilateral military exercises.

"In today's meeting we also explored probable capacity building and other joint cooperation activities in third countries, including our neighbourhood and beyond. We have convergence of views on a number of such proposals and will take those forward," Singh added.

Click here to read the [Mint ePaper](#) Mint is now on Telegram. Join [Mint channel](#) in your Telegram and stay updated with the latest [business news](#).

Log in to our website to save your bookmarks. It'll just take a moment.

Your session has expired, please login again.

You are now subscribed to our newsletters. In case you can't find any email from our side, please check the spam folder.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com