



Mains Practice Question

Q. "The evolution of India-US relations from 'estranged democracies' to 'strategic partners' reflects changing global dynamics." Examine this transformation with specific milestones. **(250 words)**

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Approach

- Introduce the answer by briefing about the transformation of India-US Relations
- Highlight the Evolution of in India-US Relations with key milestones
- Delve into the challenges and suggest way forward
- Conclude with a forward looking approach.

Introduction

India and the United States, the world's two largest democracies, have undergone a remarkable transformation in their bilateral relations. From being "**estranged democracies**" during the Cold War to becoming "**strategic partners**", this evolution reflects shifting **geopolitical dynamics, economic convergence, and defense cooperation**.

Body

Evolution of in India-US Relations:

- **Cold War Era: The Period of Estrangement**
 - **Non-Alignment Policy (1950s-1980s):** India's **non-aligned stance** and close ties with the Soviet Union strained relations with the US, which had a strong alliance with Pakistan.
 - **US Military Aid to Pakistan:** The **1954 US-Pakistan military pact** and arms supplies widened the gap.
- **Nuclear Tests and Sanctions:** India's **1974 nuclear test (Smiling Buddha)** led to US-imposed sanctions, further distancing relations.
- **Post-Cold War: Economic and Diplomatic Rapprochement (1990s-2004)**
 - **Economic Liberalization (1991):** India's **economic reforms** attracted US investment, leading to greater economic interdependence.
 - With the Soviet Union's collapse, India reoriented its foreign policy towards the US.
 - **Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP, 2004):** Marked a shift towards **defense, high-tech trade, and space collaboration**.
- **Civil Nuclear Agreement: The Turning Point (2005-2008)**
 - **The 2008 Civil Nuclear Deal ended India's nuclear isolation**, recognizing it as a **responsible nuclear power**.
 - Enabled **civil nuclear cooperation despite India being a non-signatory to the NPT**.
- **Strengthening Defense and Strategic Cooperation (2010-2020)**
 - **Designation as Major Defense Partner (2016):** Allowed India access to **high-end military technology**.

- **Foundational Defense Agreements: LEMOA (2016), COMCASA (2018), BECA (2020)**
- **Joint Military Exercises:** Expansion of **Malabar (US-India-Japan-Australia), Yudh Abhyas, and Vajra Prahar.**
- **Transformed Economic and Trade Partnership (2020-Present)**
 - Increased US **FDI in India**, particularly in **technology, energy, and healthcare.**
 - **US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP, 2021)** aimed at renewable energy and green technology
 - **Emerging Sectors of Collaboration**
 - **AI, Quantum Computing, and 5G:**
 - **US-India Artificial Intelligence Initiative (2022)** focuses on AI and cybersecurity.
 - **Critical and Emerging Technology Initiative (iCET, 2022)** promotes joint innovation.

While India-US ties have undergone significant transformation, **key challenges persist:**

- **Trade Barriers:** US concerns over India's trade surplus, tariffs, and data localization; India's issues with US steel tariffs, GSP removal, and WTO disputes.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India's Russia ties (S-400 deal) and neutral Ukraine stance strain US ties; BRICS & SCO seen as balancing acts.
- **Defense & Tech:** Delays in COMCASA/BECA due to security concerns; US export controls limit tech access.
- **Visa Issues:** H-1B restrictions and green card backlog impact Indian professionals.

Measures to Strengthen the Strategic Partnership:

- **Economic and Trade Relations:** Fast-track bilateral trade agreement, resolve tariff disputes, and boost investment in manufacturing.
- **Defense and Security:** Enhance joint defense production under Defence Technology and Trade Initiative and improve cybersecurity collaboration.
- **Technology & Digital Cooperation:** Expand partnerships in AI, quantum computing, and semiconductors; **increase US investment in India's digital infrastructure.**
- **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** Strengthen QUAD cooperation and maritime security in the Indian Ocean.
- **Immigration & Workforce:** Streamline **H-1B visa processes and expedite green card approvals** for skilled workers.

Conclusion

India-US relations have transformed from **distant democracies to indispensable strategic partners. From Cold War tensions to present-day cooperation in defense, trade, technology, and Indo-Pacific security, the trajectory highlights shared democratic values, economic interdependence, and geopolitical alignment.**