

INDIA - USA RELATIONS DURING PANDEMIC

Author's Name: ¹Dr .Hema Gandotra, ²Kahkeshan Shanaz

Affiliation: ¹Sr. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Jammu (J & K), 18001, India

²Ph.D Research Scholor, Department of Sociology, University of Jammu (J & K), 18001, India

E-Mail ID: sheikhkahkeshan011777@gmail.com

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Abstract

India-US shares a “Global Strategic partnership” due to its bilateral relations which is mainly based on shared values and its interests on regional and global levels. The good governance in India has created an opportunity to enhance the bilateral ties and cooperate under various programs with USA. The summit level statement came in June 2016 stated the relationship of US- India is an “enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century”. The traces of such bilateral and collaborating relations between India US can be seen in the 15th century era also i.e. India has good ties with USA pre independence also. Today also, the bilateral relation of US-India covers trade, defence, education, security, health care, science and technology. While the focus in this paper on US-India relation is mainly on the relationship between these two nations during Pandemic situations. This paper attempts to ponder the relationship of two nations amid ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Pandemic, COVID-19, India-USA, Cordial ties, Challenges, bilateral relations.

INTRODUCTION

The world in which we live is divided into nation states. The “state” is a creation of man not a relation of mother earth or nature, which makes it a “Man-made construct”. No state lives in isolation. All states interact with each other. The interaction amongst the states has been occurring since ancient times. The history of International Relations generally traced back to the peace of Westphalia of 1648 in Europe. The nature of this interaction certainly get transformed from ancient to modern and globalised era in past few centuries. When all the states in the world interacts at global level it creates international relation state system and contemporarily international relation. (Brown . M ,Singh, 2018)

Post cold war and the disintegration of USSR it ended the bipolarity system in the world. Post this following the NAM(Non- Aligned Movement), India and other countries in Asia and different continent maintained their diplomatic ties. Since, Independence India had tried well to maintain diplomatic relations with neighboring countries and with the first world countries also. India has gone up and down in relation with many countries on international sphere and India has always tried to maintain cordial relations with most countries of Asia and 1st world countries. Among First World Countries the India has maintained very strong relations with USA and its traces can be seen in 15th century But modern and officially diplomatic relations started later after India's independence (<https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-india-relations>)

INDIA & US RELATIONS

Background

The history of India - US relations can be traced back to 15th century when USA was discovered

by Christopher Columbus in his search for the new route to India. With the passage of time and many centuries the relations between both countries got alive after mid 20 century, soon after when India got Independence.

India & USA relations remain very dynamic after II world war during cold war. During cold war period in 1960's and the bipolarity of world lead India to follow its own way with NAM (Non Aligned Movement). This resulted in the lack of communication between India & US. We have seen the relations of any democratic nations depends upon their political regime and democratic will of the people. The relations were not good enough & were exclusively exposed in 1971 War of Bangladesh liberation. When US deployed naval fleet in Bay of Bengal. The USA stand against India and was in support of Pakistan. Later in 1974 under operation Smiling Buddha, India was vehemently criticised and opposed for this nuclear test by USA and other nations. From here we can say that India & US relations post cold war & the USSR disintegration were not on good track. India at that time did not even want to continue their relations with USA in such manner (Kumar,2009).

Later after 1991, USSR disintegration we saw many changes in India's foreign & diplomatic policies. The relation embarked with US president Bill Clinton path breaking trip to India in 2000 and Atal Bihari's visit to US in 2001. In 2006 George W. Bush visited India to meet PM Dr. Manmohan Singh. Both the visits took ties to the new level. Both the nations also signed Indo- US strategic partnership.(PERKOVICH,2010)

The most close ties were seen during the reign of Mr. Barak Obama & Mr. Narinder Modi and then during Mr. Trump. Both the nation signed many trade deals, decided to work jointly in defence sector, hand in hand against terrorism aspire to make achievement in space sector also & built cultural relation also.(Raunio & Wagner (2017).)

Currently the US government under Trump & Indian government under Modi took new ways to make the good relations. Signed deals in defence & in return USA also helped to contain the Chinas intervene and their activities with India later Trump also offered him to mediate to improve to our relation with Pakistan on Kashmir issue. US – India are working hand in hand in COVID -19 pandemic situation. Though the relation between both the nations were not good enough initially but later regime transformed & changed their attitude and approach and also in diplomatic policies which can be seen in 21st century. Now India has another opportunity to turn USA newly formed govt. after recent elections into their favor. With their positive approach and healthy diplomatic & strategic ties.(<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>)

INDIA- US DURING PANDEMIC

Who is the greatest enemy of mankind?

Human themselves or viruses in past, world has been attacked by many outbreaks like COVID-19 but the most lethal were Spanish flu in 1918 second being H1 N1 in 2009 and presently going through the worst SARS2- COVID-19 which is highly contagious virus.

During Spanish flu India lost almost 6% of its population and same whereas, during N1 H1 virus 2009 outbreak was in small Mexican town and in India its first case was recorded in Hyderabad, the man returned from USA. Both the nations i.e USA and India jointly worked respectively and took strong preventive measures to stop the spread of these dreadful viruses. (B L Rao, 2003)

India and USA are nations with great number of population in their respective states one is the largest democracy and later be the oldest democracy . During the outbreak of dreadful viruses like H1N1, COVID-19, it is very complex for such nations to combat the domestic conditions and to bring a behavioral change among people to stop the spread of such viruses.(Amanat, F., Stadlbauer, D., Strohmeier,2020)

Pondering over the history of above mentioned viruses, our main focus is to highlight the Indo-US relations amid COVIT-19 pandemic. Through we were known that the China was the host country for the outbreak of SARS2- COVID-19 virus. But later this virus engulfed almost the whole world. The first nation that was affected by this virus after China was Philippines and within few months almost the whole world was in the grip of this pandemic. The first case of COVID-19 in India was reported on Jan,2020 in Kerala who had travel history. India experienced the rise in cases in March 2020 and in USA in April 2020. There has been many strict steps that have been taken by the respective governments that are mentioned below:

➤ **STRICT LOCKDOWN**

After sudden spurt in COVIT-19 cases both the nations i.e. India and USA imposed strict lockdown for few months. Though USA was bit late in imposing lockdown and faced its very lethal consequences. According to latest data USA is the most affected country with highest number of COVID-19 cases in the world followed by India, both the nations have jointly taken serious and effective measures to contain the COVID-19 cases in their respective nations. Now a days the researchers of Indian Pharma and RNA corporation of USA are playing an important role in fighting against this virus. (Ghosh,Nundy, and Mallick,2020) Therefore, it is evident that India and USA have cordial binding relations with each other amid this pandemic situation.

➤ **MEDICAL AID AND HEALTH DIPLOMACY**

Amid COVID-19 pandemic both the nations i.e. India and USA are working jointly to combat with corona virus and their collaboration in life sciences , Science & Technology and health sector will benefit the whole world said Taranjit Singh Sandhu on July,2020 ,India's Ambassador to US. (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-us-collaborating-closely-during-covid-19-pandemic-ambassador-taranjit-singh-sandhu/articleshow/77013066.cms?from=mdr>). He further added that “our pharmaceutical companies are working closely together , for co- development of a vaccine. There are at least three, such collaborations. Gilead has entered into an agreement, with seven Indian pharmaceutical companies, to manufacture and distribute Remdesivir, which has been authorized for treating COVID-19. Both nations, US and India: US the oldest democracy and India be the largest democracy allies enjoyed bipartisan support even during the pandemic situation.(<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/3-indian-firms-sign-licensing-deal-with-gilead-for-supply-of-covid-19-drug/articleshow/75712362.cms>)

COVID-19 fostered stronger ties between India and US as both nations extended medical aid to each other. India has always being on frontline to help the other nations as India is the largest producer of anti -malarial drug i.e. hydroxychloroquine exported 50 million Hydroxychloroquine tablets to USA. India helped many other nations by different ways & initiatives like operation Sanjeevani, operation Vande Bharat under which they have provided

medical aid (PCM tablets, HQL Tablets, PPE Kits, Gloves, etc) to different neighboring nations. (<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update---17-november-2020>).

The USA had also provided USD 5.9 million to India to contain the spread of COVID-19 for providing care for affected, disseminating essential public health messages to communities and to strengthen case finding and surveillance US also announced the supply of ventilators to India which is a life-saving device. Over all India has gifted USD5 million medical aid to world combat COVID-19 AND India was appreciated by different organizations and nations for its helping moves during this crucial time of pandemic. (<https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/us-provides-nearly-usd-5-9-million-in-health-assistance-to-india-on-covid-19/75201656#:~:text=x-US%20provides%20nearly%20USD%205.9%20million%20in%20health%20assistance%20to,surveillance%2C%20it%20said%20on%20Thursday.>)

➤ **AYURVEDA FOR TREATING COVID-19 PATIENTS: INDIA-US TO INITIATE JOINT CLINICAL TRIALS**

Indian Ambassador to US, Mr. Taranjit Singh Sandhu (IFS) argued that India and US Ayurvedic Practitioners and researchers are planning joint clinical trials for Ayurveda formulations against the novel corona-virus. He further argued IUSSTF-The Indo-US Science Technology Forum. has always been instrumental in promoting the excellence in Science & Technology and innovation through collaborative activities and this will help scientists in exchanging knowledge and research resources on this front. India & U.S.A also decided to strengthen the Indo-US vaccine Action Programme (VAP). (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>).

➤ **DIASPORA AND TOURISM**

USA and India have largest population in their respective nations. Due to rapid rise in the corona virus both the nations decided to take few measure at their domestic level to protect their nation states. Many Indian diasporas lives in U.S.A and other nations. Due to pandemic situation U.S.A freezed all kinds of visas and debarred the entry of any foreigners to U.S.A and India under Vande Bharat Mission decided to bring back all the Indian citizens back to the Country. (Tzogopoulos,2020).

This results to great job loss and unemployment. The economic activities were also hampered due to lack of man force in the nation and hence lead to the slowdown in trade and other economic activities between U.S & India. Many other earlier trade deals were suspended due to pandemic threat. Over 2 lakh Indian students studying in various American universities and they constitute second largest group of foreign students after China. They all suffered due to the pandemic. Here we can say that the tourism of both the nations have been badly affected due to COVID-19.

➤ **INDIA-US DEFENCE DEAL & DIALOGUE 2020**

India and USA has defence relations on great heights. India and US strived towards better defence relations during COVID-19. We have few glimpses of India – US defence deals and dialogues that are mentioned below:-

1. **India-US 2+2 Dialogue 2020:-** Recently India-US 2+2 dialogue held in India. On this format defence and foreign ministers and secretaries met their counterparts from another country for dialogues on various defence deals. Michael R. Pompeo-US Secretary of Defence U.S joined Rajnath Singh who is Defence Minister of India and Dr. Jaishanker of India for 3rd annual India and USA 2+2 Dialogue at New Delhi in India. Both nations welcomed the Comprehensive and Global Partnership of US-India which is very important for stability and security for both nation the world.

Pompeo, the secretary of US reaffirmed the heights of close and Cordial ties of US- India during the meeting and also shared goals for regional prosperity and security. He also reaffirmed the collaboration of India and U.S in healthcare sphere to develop essential medical equipments, vaccines, therapeutics and other essentials required to meet the challenges of pandemic COVID-19. Counterparts also welcomed various initiatives that are collaborating at International Center of Excellence in Research who are focusing on innovation of vaccine and medicine for emerging threats like COVID-19. They have also discussed various ways to enhance the defence partnership of 21st century.

Pompeo and Esper on the behalf of their nation invited their counterparts for the upcoming US- India 2+2 dialogue which is going to be held in Washington DC. Counterparts from both the nations desired for more years of close and Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership between India and U.S.A. (<https://www.thehindu.com>)

2. **India-USA signed \$155 million Defence deal on April, 2020:-**

The State Department of U.S has approved two missile deals with India. The first deal between US and India is for AGM-84L Harpoon Black II air missile. These missiles can be used at maritime partoling aircraft to enhance the capability of India in warfare to defend its sea lanes. The second deal includes the 16MK54 “All up Round Lightweight Torpedoes” (LWT) and MK54LWT. These missiles were bought by India from U.S to enhance its anti-submarine Warfare and it can also be used with P-81. Moreover, on Feb25, 2020 Trump jointly with India’s Prime Minister stated the deepen and strategic partnership between the two largest democracies of the world. (<https://indiaincgroup.com/under-the-shadow-of-the-pandemic-india-us-relations-hit-new-highs/>)

3. **India -USA Signed BECA Agreement (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement):-**

This agreement between US and India will benefit more to India as it can provide military-grade data that can help draw up target coordinates.” and will help in navigating and targeting missiles with higher accuracy. **BECA** will provide access to India to accurate geo-spatial data which is very helpful in military aspects to give Indian missiles a killer edge. (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>)

4. **Malabar Naval Exercise 2020:-**

The Malabar Naval Exercise has culminated in Bay of Bengal in which United States Navy, Indian Navy, Royal Australian Navy, Japan Maritime Self Defence Force participated. This 24th multinational Maritime naval exercise conducted in “zero contact” format due to the COVID-19 Pandemic on November 3, 2020. (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>)

All these dialogues and deals were done during 2020 which is the darkest era of COVID-19. Therefore it shows that USA and India are always jointly prepared on defence fronts as well as on other spheres like health care, Research, Science and Technology with cordial and thick ties.

➤ TRADE DIPLOMACY AND ECONOMY

Pre COVID-19, Indian and US trade relations were on great reach. Both the countries had done many bilateral trade agreements. USA was going through the trade war with China and this caused an economic slowdown in many nations which were in trade agreement with these two nations. India also faced economic slowdown in 2019. In 2020 during COVID-19 the condition turned from bad to worse. Every country was assessed by negative growth rate including India and USA. But from USA's perspective, India has trade surplus with USA in 2020 and USA surpassed China to become India's top trading partner during pandemic. Though having various trade and economy issues with USA but during COVID-19 India pushed limits to maintain the trade relations and policies with USA in following ways:

- India's Commerce minister Piyush Goyal recently announced that India and the US are "almost there" in closing a "quick trade deal". (<https://www.deccanherald.com>)
- Countries are adapting IPR's (Intellectual Properties) laws to priorities health during COVID-19.

Therefore both nations have taken best preventive measures and steps to boost the trade and economy and by this means they have taken their relation at summit.

CONCLUSION

In 2020, India

US jointly faced and worked on many challenges. We can say that the 2020 year was the year full of challenges. But for every nation it is important to have good cordial relations and diplomatic ties with other countries at global level. It can be concluded that the main focus of this research paper has been on the India and US relations during COVID-19 pandemic which is very collaborating, cordial and friendly in every sphere. Both nations have jointly provided aid to each other as per their requirements till date. But the era we saw and mentioned in this paper was under the reign of Mr. Donald Trump. Recently the elections have been conducted and Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are the prime faces chosen by the US citizens. So, now the India will surely see the change in USA relation. But India has to understand the ideology of the USA with regard to itself to other nations as well. Therefore, India needs to be very clear with USA on every front to maintain and continue its smooth and cordial relationship.

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