

Four Fundamental Pacts India-USA 2+2 Dialogue

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In News

- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held the third edition of the 2+2 talks with US Secretary of State

Four Fundamental Pacts India-USA

- India and the United States on (October 27) signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), which, along with the two agreements signed earlier – the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) – completes a **troika of “foundational pacts”** for deep military cooperation between the two countries.

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)

- **Signed In 2020**
- BECA will help India get real-time access to American geospatial intelligence that will enhance the accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones. Through the sharing of information on maps and satellite images, it will help India access topographical and aeronautical data, and advanced products that will aid in navigation and targeting.
- This could be key to Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation between India and the US. Just as your radio cab (or the GPS in your smartphone) helps you zero in on the path to your destination and helps you reach it quickly and efficiently, BECA will provide Indian military systems with a high-quality GPS to navigate missiles with real-time intelligence to precisely target the adversary.

- Besides the sailing of ships, flying of aircraft, fighting of wars, and location of targets, geospatial intelligence is also critical to the response to natural disasters.
- The signing of BECA flows from the commitment in the joint statement during President Donald Trump's visit in February this year, when the two sides said they looked forward to an "early conclusion" of BECA.

Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)

- **Signed in 2018**

- COMCASA was signed in September 2018, after the first 2+2 dialogue during which then External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and then Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met the visiting Secretary of State Michael R Pompeo and then Secretary of Defence James N Mattis.
- The pact allows the US to provide India with its encrypted communications equipment and systems so that Indian and US military commanders, and the aircraft and ships of the two countries, can communicate through secure networks during times of both peace and war. Again, to take a simple example, it's like being able to exchange messages or communicate with a friend on WhatsApp, Signal, or Telegram in real time and in a secure manner.
- The signing of COMCASA paved the way for the transfer of communication security equipment from the US to India to facilitate "interoperability" between their forces – and potentially with other militaries that use US-origin systems for secure data links.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)

- **Signed in 2016**

- LEMOA was the first of the three pacts to be signed in August 2016. LEMOA allows the militaries of the US and

India to replenish from each other's bases, and access supplies, spare parts and services from each other's land facilities, air bases, and ports, which can then be reimbursed.

- LEMOA is extremely useful for India-US Navy-to-Navy cooperation, since the two countries are cooperating closely in the Indo-Pacific. To put the usefulness of this agreement in simple terms, it is like being able to stop at a friend's garage or workshop to refuel your car or get it repaired when you are far away from your own home or workshop.
- The critical element that underpins LEMOA is mutual trust. Without trust, no country will be willing to expose its military and strategic assets such as warships to the facilities of another country.
- The signing of LEMOA was in itself an affirmation of the mutual trust between the two militaries, and its application will enhance the trust. It took almost a decade to negotiate LEMOA, and the exercise in a sense bridged the trust deficit between India and the US, and paved the way for the other two foundational pacts.
- While India had indeed provided ad hoc logistics support to the US in the past – such as allowing the refuelling of American aircraft in Bombay during the first Gulf War in 1991, and letting US warships visit Indian ports during the war on terror after 9/11– the signing of LEMOA has institutionalised this process and made it smoother.

General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)

- **Signed in 2002**
- The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) was signed by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government back in 2002.
- The agreement prescribed security standards and protocols for safeguarding information shared by the

Pentagon with India's defence ministry, as well as by US defence firms with Indian defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs).

- However, GSOMIA did not cover the exchange of classified information with Indian private companies.

2+2 Dialogue

- It is a format of dialogue where the defense and foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country. 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism between the two countries.
- India holds such talks with Australia, at the foreign secretary and defense secretary level but with Japan and the US at the ministerial level.
- With the US this was the second 2+2 meeting (Washington), first was held in New Delhi in September 2018.
- The US holds such ministerial dialogues with Australia and Japan also.