International Relations · GS - II

What is the significance of Indo-US defence deals over Indo-Russian defence deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

India-US defence cooperation; defence technology; interoperability; foundational agreements; Indo-Russian defence partnership; diversification; strategic autonomy; maritime security; Indo-Pacific stability; dependence and geopolitical risks

Model Answer

Introduction

India's defence partnerships with the United States and Russia serve different strategic purposes. Indo-US defence cooperation has expanded through advanced technology and interoperability, while Russia remains a major source of India's legacy military equipment and defence platforms.

Significance of Indo-US defence cooperation

- **Advanced technology:** US cooperation offers access to selected advanced platforms, surveillance systems, maritime technologies and specialised equipment.
- **Interoperability:** Foundational agreements, including the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), COMCASA and BECA, facilitate logistics cooperation, secure communications and geospatial information-sharing.
- **Maritime security:** Cooperation strengthens maritime-domain awareness, naval exercises and the ability to respond to regional contingencies.

- **Supply-chain diversification:** Greater engagement with the US can reduce excessive dependence on a single supplier over time.
- **Industrial cooperation:** Joint production, technology collaboration and defence manufacturing partnerships can support India's domestic capabilities.

Continuing importance of Russia

- **Established platforms:** Russian-origin systems remain central to several Indian military capabilities.
- **Maintenance and spare parts:** Existing inventories require sustained logistical support and upgrades.
- **Strategic flexibility:** Relations with Russia preserve India's ability to engage multiple powers and avoid exclusive alignment.
- **Long-standing cooperation:** Russian partnerships have contributed to India's defence-industrial development and selected joint projects.

Implications for Indo-Pacific stability

Indo-US cooperation can strengthen deterrence, maritime surveillance and the ability to protect sea lanes. However, an exclusively bloc-based approach could increase strategic polarisation. India must also manage sanctions risks, technology restrictions and dependence on foreign suppliers.

Way forward

India should diversify procurement, prioritise domestic research and production, strengthen maintenance capabilities and assess deals on lifecycle costs and strategic requirements. Cooperation should remain consistent with India's independent foreign policy.

Conclusion

Indo-US defence deals offer significant advantages in advanced technology and Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation, while Indo-Russian ties remain essential for existing capabilities. A diversified, self-reliant defence strategy best serves India's security and regional stability.