**2+2 Dialogue: torpedo at regional peace**

[Hassnain Javed](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/hassnain-javed/%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20Hassnain%20Javed)

November 4, 2020

The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) was signed in Delhi on the occasion of the third edition of the India-US 2 + 2 talks. The agreement will allow India to acquire accurate topographical, nautical, aeronautical data, and topographical images on a real-time basis through US military satellites. The information retrieved could be used for missiles and surveillance drones. The eighth deal that the United States and India have signed after their strategic partnership commenced in 2005.

Before this, India has signed three foundational agreements with the United States. In 2016, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was signed. In 2018, the Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed. In 2019, there was the signing of the Industrial Security Annex (ISA) that was briefly the extension of the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which was initially signed in 2002. Even though the BECA agreement is being framed as part of efforts to suppress China, however, this agreement will also increase Pakistan’s strategic dilemma. The Foreign Office, in its reaction to the signing of the deal, said: “Pakistan has taken note of the signing of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement. Pakistan has been consistently highlighting the threats posed to strategic stability in South Asia due to the provision of advanced military hardware, technologies, and knowledge to India.”

Besides this, it is suspected in Islamabad that the agreement will most influence Pakistan. It is of significance to note that the developments have substantiated fears about the military spin-offs of high-tech trade with India, which have not only deteriorated international standards but have harmed South Asia’s strategic stability.These advancements explicitly contradict the argument that India’s integration into foreign export control regimes would foment the non-proliferation goals of such rules.

Pakistan has preserved a delicate balance, but it can be negatively affected if the US begins to improve India’s military capabilities, which can pose a clear and present danger to Pakistan

Moreover, BECA came at a time of intense tension in the area; the annual US-India strategic dialogue comes with Indian soldiers confronting Chinese forces on their contested Himalayan border and deteriorating relations between fierce rivals in the region. In the light of India’s tense border standoff with China in eastern Ladakh, the signing of a long-negotiated security pact is of significance to note.The contract was made as part of the two countries’ 2 + 2 dialogue. The signing off agreement only a week before the US presidential election has a somewhat clear indication that Washington has a political deal on advancing strategic relations with India. In my view, BECA will provide India’s aboriginal intelligence, intelligence gathering capabilities with an American quantum state. The data made available to India under BECA would enhance the quality and reliability of its missiles. In future military aircraft deals, it would also allow the US to provide advanced navigation systems and aircraft engines to India.

The spiraling cooperation in strategy and defense is part of the US plans to use India as a counterforce to China. The strengthening of US-Indian relations has some serious ramifications for Pakistan. The US may have ideological reasons for restricting Chinese power in the region, but it should be quite conscious and aware that it will converge through regional interstate complexities. Taking one direction in which the United States needs to combat China’s supremacy is to collaborate with India, but this has a detrimental influence on Pakistan’s relations. Pakistan has pursued a gauged approach within the broader domain of superpower rivalry to maintain positive ties with China and the US. It benefits our nation, and there is no reason why we would like to break our relations in place of the other with one power. Pakistan has retained a strategically close and attuned relationship with China since the 1970s; with the spinning through CPEC agreement, both states have come much more intimate. In several places, including Afghanistan, Pakistan continues to have a close relationship with the US, effectively paying dividends in the contemporary era.

Historically, Pakistan has preserved a delicate balance, but it can be negatively affected if the US begins to improve India’s military capabilities, which can pose a clear and present danger to Pakistan. America knows well how, in early 2019, India tried a botched bombing inside Pakistan and almost took the two nations to war. Despite sabotaging Indian provocation, it was Pakistan’s strategic stability that prevented a violent rebellion. However, the Narendra Modi government’s aggressive comments against Pakistan try to retain the region under the threat of violence. Rather than feeding into India’s belligerence, the US should consider these factors well and guarantee its acts contribute to fostering peace. Despite a developing country, Pakistan is a problematic area and should be dealt with carefully both by the US and India. As Pakistan will suffer the consequences indeed the state dreaming of competing for the world, two superpowers have to suffer as it always takes two for tango.

*Special Advisor (Pakistan Institute of Management, Lahore operated under Federal Ministry of Industries and Production, Islamabad) and Foreign Research Associate (Centre of Excellence, China Pakistan Economic Corridor, Islamabad)*