

MAINS 2016 CURRENT AFFAIRS
GENERAL STUDIES 2
2A. INDIA-USA LOGISTICS AGREEMENT

By agreeing to sign the **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)**, India has sent out a clear signal that it has no inhibitions about being bound in strategic engagements with the U.S. India and US agreed "in principle" to a logistics exchange agreement to enable both militaries to use each other's assets and bases for repair and replenishment of supplies.

LEMOA is a tweaked version of Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) which facilitates the provision of logistical support, supplies and services between the US military and the armed forces of partner countries. **American aircraft and warships will soon be able to access Indian military bases for refuelling, repair and other logistical purposes.** In turn, India's military will enjoy similar access to U.S. bases. This would qualitatively transform India's relations with the U.S.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) **does not entail stationing of any US troops on Indian soil, and India will not extend support in the event of any US military action against "friendly countries"**. The logistics pact is just meant to facilitate military cooperation and not aimed at forging any sort of a military alliance against China.

LEMOA is a shift from the policy of the UPA regime which opposed the three foundational pacts: Logistics Support Agreement, Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA). These were done on grounds that they would "**compromise**" **India's traditional strategic autonomy** and give "basing rights" to the US military in the country. UPA believed the agreements were too intrusive and could also be perceived as a signal that India was **jettisoning its policy of non-alignment**. India has provided logistics assistance to the US in the past on a case-by-case basis, which included providing refuelling facilities to American aircraft during the Gulf War in 2001.

CISMOA

CISMOA stands for Communication and Information Security Memorandum Agreement. This agreement would allow the interoperability of India and United States equipment. Interoperability means that there would be **access to encrypted and secret technologies** or communications. So far United States has blocked sale of some of the advanced technologies and sensitive equipment to India on account of non-signing this agreement. Signing this agreement would help because such advanced technologies and sensitive equipment are generally installed on US procured systems only. This agreement could also be important for multinational operations related to rescue, disaster relief etc.

BECA

BECA refers to **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation**. This agreement would facilitate exchange of geospatial information between India and United States for both military and civilian use.

However, some Indian military officials do not support the CISMOA and BECA. The agreements would provide the US with access to communications about Indian military operations.

Signing of the agreements is viewed as a pretext to create **military alliances** in Asia and put pressure on India to buy expensive weaponry from the US. It is seen as against India's military

neutrality and conveys a more **provocative message to China**. The Indian Navy and armed forces also does not want to tie down only to US system. **Russia**, which is India's oldest ally in defence technology transfer, has repeatedly raised the issue of India tilting towards the US.

ADVANTAGES FOR INDIA

United States calls these agreements as “foundational” in terms of cooperation of defence or sensitive technologies. US argues that these would enable **technology transfer, logistics and seamless communication between military systems** of the two countries. Further, the LSA would also help India to deal with 21st century challenges more efficiently by correcting the deficiencies in logistics. It would help them to share their experience and strengthen their operational capabilities in joint military exercises, training, and defence equipment sales. It's worth note here that India has gained from the US experience in handling **cyber terrorism, conducting rescue and relief operations during natural disasters, dealing with improvised explosive devices** etc. The US has also benefitted from the Indian experience of **fighting on various terrains, dealing with ethnic conflicts, international peacekeeping** etc. Further, these agreements also have **economic benefits**.

The US is the largest arms supplier to India over last 4 years. The US has bagged Indian arms contracts worth over \$14 billion since 2007 and more are in pipeline. India will be participating in two major military exercises, Exercise Rim of the Pacific and Exercise Red Flag in 2016. **Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC)** is the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise, hosted and administered by the US Navy. RIMPAC is held biennially during June and July, and 22 countries had participated in the 2014 edition of the exercise. **Exercise Red Flag** is an advanced aerial combat training exercise hosted by the US Air Force at Nevada and India will be returning to this exercise in 2016 after a gap of eight years.