

India- Egypt Relations

written by iasexam.com | 27/01/2023



Context- Recently India and Egypt reiterated support for the Non-Aligned Movement.

Key Highlights

- In a joint statement issued after the end of bilateral engagements for the President of Egypt, who was the chief guest at the Republic Day parade here, both countries expressed desire for exchange of technology between their defence industries.
- The two countries reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism, the principles of the United Nations Charter, international law, the founding values of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.
- India and Egypt also agreed to “initiate new engagements to intensify military-to-military engagements” and planned more joint exercises between the armed forces of the two countries.
- The ties have been on an upswing in the recent past and both delegations supported reform of the UN Security Council, where Egypt was a non-permanent member during 2016-17 and India had a similar stint during 2021-22.
- Egypt’s relation with India was helped by its display of pragmatism especially in the backdrop of the Nupur Sharma controversy of 2022 when Cairo maintained silence while certain Gulf countries were vocal in India’s criticism.
- The joint statement also expressed support to safeguard cultural principles and stated that, “The two sides take into consideration the cultural and social sensitivities of all states and, in this regard, they agreed to work together to promote and safeguard these basic principles through regular consultations and coordination at bilateral and multilateral levels.

- The two governments also agreed to fight terrorism in all forms, “including cross-border terrorism” and intensify consultation between their respective National Security Councils.
- Both of the leaders expressed concern over the spread of terrorism across the world and agreed that it poses one of the most serious security threats to humanity.
- Also they condemned the use of terrorism as a foreign policy tool,” read the joint statement, calling for “zero tolerance” towards terrorism.

Bilateral Relations

- India and Egypt both enjoy warm and friendly relations marked by civilizational, cultural, and economic linkages and deep-rooted people-to-people ties.
- The two countries work closely at multilateral as well as at international platforms.

Political relations

- The joint announcement of establishment of diplomatic relations at Ambassadorial level was first made in 1947.
- Regarding covid pandemic, Egypt dispatched three planes with medical supplies to India in 2021.
- In addition, Embassy of India signed an agreement to procure 300,000 doses of REMDESEVIR from M/s EVA Pharma, Egypt
- **India-LAS Engagement:** The 3rd Meeting of the Arab-India Cooperation Forum also took place virtually in 2021.
- The discussions focused on major issues of mutual concern on both regional and international levels, collaboration in the field of diagnostics and treatment to fight the Covid-19 pandemic and increasing cooperation in the fields of economy, trade and investment, energy and environment, agriculture and food security, science and technology, media, human resource development etc.
- Operation Sankalp, that saw the Indian Navy escort oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz as tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran escalated, was a good example of India’s mandate in the region moving up from anti-piracy operations to overt protection of national assets and interests.

Trade

- Bilateral trade between India and Egypt achieved a record high of 7.26 billion dollars in 2021-22.
- The trade was fairly balanced, with 3.74 billion Indian exports to Egypt and 3.52 billion imports from Egypt to India.
- The India-Egypt Bilateral Trade Agreement has been in operation since March 1978 and it is based on the Most Favoured Nation clause

Investment

- Above 50 Indian companies have invested around 3.15 billion dollars in diverse sectors of the Egyptian economy, including chemicals, energy, textile, garment, agri-business,

and retail.

- Egyptian investments in India are to the tune of US\$ 37 million that include smart electrometers, car paints, I.T Services, etc.
- The grants-in-aid projects include Pan Africa Tele-medicine and Tele-education project in Alexandria University, Solar electrification project in Agaween village and Vocational Training Centre for textile technology in Shoubra, Cairo, which have been completed.

Science and Technology

- ‘Science & Technology’ cooperation is implemented through biennial Executive Programmes and Scientific Cooperation Programme between CSIR (India) and NRC (Egypt).
- The first ever Joint Working Group on Cyber Issues was held in New Delhi in 2016.
- The 4th Joint Committee Meeting on Science & Technology was held in New Delhi in 2017.
- And the 2nd ISRO-NARSS JWG was held in Cairo in 2017.
- The India-Egypt Workshops on Agriculture-Biotechnology and Nanotechnology were held in Shillong in 2018 and in Mumbai in 2019.
- An IT Centre in Al Azhar University, CEIT, is also operational from February 2019.

Defence

- Most of the current defence cooperation is determined by the Joint Defence Committee (JDC) activities
- The 8th Joint Defence Committee (JDC) was held in New Delhi in 2018.
- And the 9th JDC was held in Cairo in 2019.
- IAF pilots had trained Egyptian pilots from the 1960s until 1984.
- In the recent past, since 2015, there have been several high-level exchanges of visits by defense delegations.
- The first joint exercise between the special forces of the Indian Army and the Egyptian Army named “Exercise Cyclone-I” is in progress at Jaisalmer in Rajasthan since January 2023.

Suggestions for future:

- Economic partnership – Egypt is in economic flux and it requires an urgent infusion of capital to avoid any long-term economic distress.
- For example Arab Spring, which was backed by people’s anger against economic destitution, cronyism and corruption.
- Russia’s war on Ukraine – led to a commodity crunch, specifically in the agriculture sector such as critical wheat imports – India may come out as a viable alternative
- Security perspective – An outreach to Egypt is part of its construct of a security architecture in West Asia, particularly the Gulf including UAE, arguably the most powerful leader in the region today
- Energy security is set to become even more precarious over the next few years, India’s naval and aerial military engagements through the mechanism of joint exercises should see an uptick.

- Trade cooperation –like the Suez Canal is critical for India as part of international trade systems.

Way forward

- India-Egypt ties in their current stage will need time and honing to lead to more concrete strategic posture.
- The opening with defence exercises is a good platform to further develop access to fulfil Egypt's defence requirements.
- While the entire saga of India wanting to sell its HAL Tejas jets to Egypt was an over-ambitious and unrealistic endeavour, promoting defence along with agriculture, Information Technology, amongst others as areas of cooperation can add benefits to Cairo as it looks to diversify its economic footprint.