

India–Egypt Defence and Security Cooperation

*Prasanta Kumar Pradhan**

India's defence and security cooperation with Egypt is one of the oldest in the Arab world. Both countries established defence cooperation as early as the 1950s. Because of the changing regional geopolitics and the state of bilateral relations, the defence and security cooperation between the two countries has not achieved the success as was originally visualised. During the last decade, the political instability and regime change in Egypt were critical factors that hindered the progress of bilateral relations to some extent. But in recent years, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, defence and security cooperation between India and Egypt has received renewed attention. There has been a continuous exchange of visits at the ministerial and official levels that have been focusing on defence and security issues. Egypt has expressed its interest in procuring missiles and aircraft made in India. Both countries signed a defence cooperation agreement in 2022 during India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Cairo. Terrorism is a common concern for both countries and they have agreed to join hands to fight the menace. Similarly, regional security issues in West Asia and North Africa also remain an issue of concern for both India and Egypt.

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* Dr Prasanta Kumar Pradhan is Research Fellow and Coordinator, West Asia Centre at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The defence and security relationship between India and Egypt has seen many ups and downs during the last seven decades. It has changed with the changing dynamics of the regional politics and bilateral relations between the two countries. The relationship between India and Egypt was strong during the 1950s and 1960s as India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser started the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the Cold War, which was a key factor in the relationship between the two countries. Both countries intended to maintain neutrality from the major power blocs during the Cold War, and consequently, their political outlook translated into a stronger bilateral relationship, including a strong defence and security relationship. During that period, India provided military training to Egyptian officers and soldiers. Egyptian pilots received training from Indian Air Force officers. Cooperation also took place in the fields of joint exercises and intelligence sharing between the two countries.

In the subsequent decades, owing to the changing regional and global geopolitics, the bilateral relationship between the two countries could not make any significant progress. The trajectory of Egypt's foreign policy underwent a major change under President Anwar Sadat who signed a peace treaty with Israel and drew closer to the United States (US). This resulted in a significant reorientation in Egyptian foreign policy priorities and alliances. Besides, as both India and Egypt got preoccupied with the developments in their respective immediate neighbourhood, the bilateral relationship did not receive the required attention. As a result, the cooperation in the defence and security fields between the two that was established during the previous decade failed to consolidate further.

President Hosni Mubarak visited India in November 2008. During his visit, India and Egypt agreed to start a 'security policy dialogue' and a 'strategic dialogue' at the foreign minister level.¹ Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared that both the countries have agreed to 'make up for the lost time' and to upgrade the relationship.² Both countries agreed to work together to combat terrorism and signed an extradition treaty. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Sharm El Sheikh to participate in the 15th NAM Summit in July 2009.

In 2011, the Arab unrest emerged as a challenge for Egypt and it resulted in massive internal instability as well as a challenge to Mubarak's leadership. Mubarak's regime fell as the popular uprising against him gathered momentum and he failed to control the mass protests against his regime. Subsequently,

parliamentary and presidential elections were held that brought the Muslim Brotherhood-backed Freedom and Justice Party to power in Cairo under the leadership of President Mohamed Morsi. Morsi visited India in March 2013. Although his tenure as President was shortlived, with his visit he expressed his intention to strengthen ties with India in diverse fields. Notably, India and Egypt signed a cybersecurity cooperation agreement during his visit. The high-level visits by Mubarak and Morsi provided much-needed support to the bilateral relations at that point, but could not provide the required impetus to take the relationship to a higher level. Both countries struggled to find common bilateral and global issues to be pursued in order to forge stronger ties. This was a primary reason for the sluggishness in the bilateral relationship.³

Since Sisi came to power, he has taken interest and initiatives to strengthen the relationship with India. Since coming to power, he has made three official visits to India. President Sisi visited India in October 2015 to participate in the third India–Africa Forum Summit. He again visited India in September 2016 on an official visit. He discussed a wide of issues with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, including the defence and security issues between the two countries.⁴ He also visited India in January 2023 to participate in India’s Republic Day celebrations and had wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister Modi. For the first time, an Egyptian military contingent participated in India’s Republic Day parade, which is an indication of a growing defence cooperation between the two. President Sisi’s visits certainly have helped consolidate the India–Egypt bilateral relations in multiple fields.

India and Egypt under the current leadership of Prime Minister Modi and President Sisi seem to have found common bilateral and regional issues to cooperate. Because of the historical and civilisation relationship as well as the fast-changing political and security scenario facing both India and Egypt in their respective neighbourhoods, cooperation with Egypt has been seen as strategically important. Defence and security cooperation have emerged as key areas on which both countries have agreed to further expand the scope and content of their relationship. The pace and scope of the cooperation between the two countries have the potential to revive the Nehru–Nasser golden era moment in the India–Egypt relationship.

KEY DRIVERS IN INDIA–EGYPT DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION

There are a number of important factors that have gravitated India and Egypt towards each other to establish a stronger defence and security partnership.

Although the defence and security engagements between the two countries have always existed, it is only in the last few years that the relationship has received much more focused attention than in the past.

Both countries live in unstable neighbourhoods and face several challenges that are similar in nature. India faces challenges in the South Asian region while Egypt faces similar kinds of challenges in its neighbourhood in North Africa. Terrorism is a common challenge for both countries. India and Egypt have been facing challenges from different terrorist organisations and religious radicalism for decades. Terrorist attacks in both countries have resulted in the death of a number of civilians and security forces, the destruction of public property and created law and order problems. Therefore, it is in the common interest of both countries to join hands to fight the menace of terrorism. Militaries of both countries have substantial experience in combating terrorism in their respective countries. Joining hands and engaging with each other in sharing their strategy and skills in fighting terror will be beneficial for both.

Secondly, for India, Egypt is one of the most important countries in the African continent. India realises the potential of cooperating with Egypt in economic, technical, scientific as well as military and security affairs so that a long-term partnership can be established that will be beneficial for both. Egypt is an important trading partner for India in Africa. The total bilateral trade between India and Egypt in 2023–23 is around US\$ 6 billion with exports of US\$ 4.1 billion and imports worth US\$ 1.9 billion.⁵ Both countries are also exploring new areas of cooperation such as renewable energy, food security and cooperation in the health sector and intend to take the bilateral total trade to US\$ 12 billion by 2028.⁶ India also plans to use the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE), which will help it to gain market access to Africa and Europe. The recent announcement by the SCZONE authorities to offer ‘a dedicated cluster in the industrial and logistics hub’⁷ to India holds a lot of promise to further enhance economic ties between the two countries. Egypt intends to enhance its economic engagement with India as well. There are around 50 Indian companies present in Egypt, working in different sectors that directly contribute towards the economic growth and strengthen the bilateral relationship as well. The growing cooperation in the economic field has instilled confidence in the relationship to engage in defence and security issues.

Thirdly, from Egypt’s point of view, India is an emerging power with a stable democracy, a fast-growing economy and a country with huge potential in scientific and technical capability. Egypt faced a lot of domestic political

challenges and economic difficulties during the Arab unrest. Since coming to power, President Sisi has been trying to achieve higher economic growth and development in the country. In this regard, he is also looking towards forging stronger economic, technological, scientific and developmental cooperation with Asian countries such as India.⁸

Fourthly, India's engagement with the Arab world has increased significantly in both scope and substance under Prime Minister Modi. India's non-interventionist approach towards the Arab unrest has been appreciated by all Arab countries. India has offered them all possible support during the period of transition following the Arab unrest. This has instilled confidence in Egypt, as in many other Arab countries, about India's intention to engage meaningfully rather than getting involved in regional politics or domestic issues. Engaging in defence and security issues requires the highest level of trust and political willingness between countries. India, by way of its foreign policy approach, has won the confidence of Egypt as a potential partner in defence and security matters.

Besides, a stronger defence cooperation with Egypt would provide a platform for India to engage in similar cooperation with other African countries as well. Deeper engagement with Egypt further strengthens India's presence in the African continent. It helps India to meet its larger objective of strengthening its relationship with African countries.

Finally, India has been one of the largest arms importers in the world. But in recent years India has undertaken the Make in India and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-reliant India) initiatives in the defence sector. India expects to indigenise defence production and cut down its reliance on imports. India's quick progress in the scientific and technological arena coupled with its rich human resources provides it with a lot of opportunities in future. Egypt also relies on importing arms primarily from the US, Russia and European countries. Egypt intends to join hands with India and benefit from India's achievements. Both countries also aim to engage in joint manufacturing, research and development of defence equipment in future. Although there would be a lot of challenges on the way such as funding, expertise and sustained political will to achieve these goals, a strong foundation of cooperation in the fields of defence and security between the countries has been established.

COUNTER-TERROR COOPERATION

Terrorism is an important issue of concern for both countries. Like India, Egypt also faces huge challenges from terrorism. A number of terrorist groups

operating from the Sinai Peninsula and spreading their activities and networks are a threat to Egypt's national security. Terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al Qaeda and a number of other local terrorist and jihadi organisations also operate from the Peninsula. This has emerged as a major security challenge for the Egyptian government. Some of these groups have established networks throughout different countries in the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region. ISIS, in particular, has been highly active and has launched severe deadly terrorist attacks in the country often targeting the security forces and Christian minorities.⁹ A number of Egyptian nationals have travelled to Syria to fight for the ISIS caliphate. There are no official data on the number of Egyptians who joined ISIS because of difficulty in receiving reliable information and differences over what constitutes the definition of a foreign fighter.¹⁰ But according to some sources around 1,000 Egyptian foreign fighters joined ISIS in Syria.¹¹

Palestinian terrorist groups have maintained strong ties with terrorist groups in Egypt. The inter-state network of these terrorist groups makes it more difficult for the Egyptian government to counter them. During the period of Arab unrest, the activities of the terrorist groups in the Sinai Peninsula increased significantly. They took advantage of the popular protests in the streets against the government and the period of transition of power in Cairo.

The number and intensity of terrorist attacks increased in 2013 in the aftermath of the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi—the then president of the country belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood. This period also witnessed massive security operations by the authorities to check the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood and other terrorist groups. In 2018, the Egyptian government launched 'Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018' to eradicate the terrorist elements in the Sinai Peninsula. The Egyptian government claimed that the Operation was successful in neutralising a large number of terrorist and radical elements,¹² but there are still a number of terrorist elements present and active in the region. This continues to be an important challenge for the Egyptian government.

The Sisi government has been particularly serious about forging counter-terror cooperation with India. Both President Sisi and Prime Minister Modi have identified terrorism as one of the 'gravest threats'¹³ and agreed to cooperate in all possible ways. Both countries realise that defeating terrorism requires cooperation and support from all countries across the globe. This was emphasised during President Sisi's visit to India in 2016. In the joint statement issued by India and Egypt after the meeting between Modi and

Sisi, both countries emphasised that terrorism is a challenge to international peace and reaffirmed to work together at the international level to defeat terrorism.¹⁴

In recent years, India and Egypt have taken some political and security initiatives to work together to tackle the threat of terrorism and radicalisation, which have emerged as common concerns for both countries. Considering the seriousness of the threat of terrorism and the necessity of joining hands to fight against it, India and Egypt established a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter-Terrorism. The JWG is a bilateral mechanism to explore ways to further strengthen cooperation between the two countries on counter-terrorism. It intends to discuss and find ways to cooperate in fighting the menace of terrorism. The key objectives of this bilateral mechanism are to exchange information on the activities and networks of terrorist groups, radicalisation and terror financing. The JWG discusses issues of possible cooperation between the two countries, including holding joint military exercises, cooperation in training and helping each other in capacity building to face the challenges of terrorism.

In this regard, the first meeting of the JWG was held in January 2016. The third JWG meeting was held in February 2023 in New Delhi. In the meeting, both sides agreed to deepen their engagement in the fields of 'capacity building, exchanges of good practices and information sharing'.¹⁵ Besides, they also appealed to all countries to make efforts to eliminate terror networks, their financing and cross-border movements.¹⁶ Both countries have agreed to share information on terrorism and radicalism through cooperation between their national security councils. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on cooperation between the National Security Councils of India and Egypt in December 2015. Such exchange of operational information would help the security forces of both countries in fighting the menace of terrorism.

MILITARY-TO-MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS

In recent years, as agreed at the highest political level, military-to-military engagement between India and Egypt has increased. While the Indian Navy has been at the forefront of engaging with Egypt in recent times, with a growing understanding, trust and requirements, the air force and army from both countries have also engaged with each other in joint training and exercises. The Indian Navy has been active in engaging with its Egyptian counterpart. Navies of both countries have engaged in joint exercises, training

and port calls. There has been an exchange of high-level visits between the two navies, which have contributed to the mutual understanding and continuity in engagement.

Indian naval ships have made regular visits and port calls to Egypt. In June 2022, INS Kochi participated in a Maritime Partnership Exercise with the Egyptian Navy.¹⁷ Egypt is one of the 28 countries with whom India conducts such exercises. INS Tarangini made a port call in Alexandria in May 2022. INS Tabar made a port call and participated in the PASSEX with the Egyptian Navy at the port of Alexandria in September 2021. In July 2019, INS Tarkash visited the Egyptian naval base of Ras Al Tin and conducted a PASSEX exercise with the Egyptian Navy. As part of their overseas deployment INS Mumbai, INS Aditya, INS Gomati and INS Trishul made port calls at the port of Alexandria in July 2012.

In recent times, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has been involved in joint activities with the Egyptian Air Force. India and Egypt conducted their first-ever air exercise called Exercise ‘Desert Warrior’ in Egypt in October 2021.¹⁸ In July 2022, the IAF participated in the Tactical Leadership Programme of the Egyptian Air Force Weapons School, with Su-30 MKI and C-17 aircraft. The month-long programme focussed on the exchange of best practices, combat scenarios and Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) activities.¹⁹

The Chief of Air Staff of India, Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari, visited Egypt for five days in November–December 2021, during which he attended the defence exposition EDEX 2021 in Cairo. Earlier, Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria also paid a goodwill visit to Egypt in December 2019 and interacted with senior Egyptian officials. From the Egyptian side, Air Marshal Mohamed Abbas Helmy, Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Air Force, visited India in July 2022. Among other places, Helmy visited the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at Bengaluru and the Aircraft Systems and Testing Establishment (ASTE) as well.²⁰

Engagement between the armies of both countries has also been taking place regularly. In January 2023, the Indian Army and the Egyptian Army conducted their first-ever joint exercise in Rajasthan, India, named ‘Exercise Cyclone-I’. The objective of the 14-day long joint exercise was to exchange expertise on the interoperability of Special Forces in desert landscapes and focussed on ‘undertaking counter-terrorism, reconnaissance, raids and other special operations.’²¹ Only a month before Modi’s visit to Cairo, India’s Army Chief General Manoj Pande visited Egypt in May 2023, met with his counterpart and discussed issues to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation between the two countries.

There are regular exchanges of visits by army officials primarily for sharing expertise and training purposes. In September 2014 a team of Special Forces from the Egyptian Army visited the 50th Parachute Brigade of the Indian Army at Agra, India.²² In the same year, a six-member team from the Military Training College of the Egyptian Army visited the College of Military Engineering (CME), Pune. A delegation from the College of Defence Management (CDM) Secunderabad visited the Nasr Higher Military Academy and Egyptian Command and Staff College in February 2014. Two officers from the Indian Army visited the Egyptian Commando School in December 2016. The visit of military officials and engaging in military exercises have contributed to strengthening bilateral military and defence cooperation between the two countries.

CYBERSECURITY COOPERATION

In recent years, cybersecurity issues have emerged as serious challenges to national security around the world. Like India, Egypt has also faced a number of cyber threats that have implications for its national security. This has been one of the most important security concerns for the Government of Egypt. Egypt is one of the most vulnerable countries to cyber attacks.²³ The Egyptian government has stated that cyber attacks have challenged their national security, economy and digital infrastructure. According to Egypt's National Cybersecurity Strategy 2017–21, the most common types of cybersecurity challenges are the threat of penetrating and sabotaging ICT infrastructure, the threat of cyber terrorism and cyber warfare and the threat of digital identity and private data theft.²⁴ In the National Cybersecurity Strategy 2022–26, the government also intends to address the concerns and insecurity with regard to its national security and economy and to protect its national interests.²⁵

Although cybersecurity challenges facing Egypt are high, the country lacks the required human resources, infrastructure and technology to deal with the situation. Therefore, it is looking towards cooperating with friendly countries to face these challenges. Egypt has found India to be a reliable partner in this regard. India's phenomenal growth in the Information Technology (IT) sector has been a key feature in its economic growth during the last few decades. India is in a good position to offer support by providing the required assistance to Egypt to face cybersecurity challenges. India and Egypt signed an MoU on cyber cooperation in 2013 in which both countries agreed to cooperate on cyber-security issues. Both countries had their first Cyber

Dialogue in December 2016 in New Delhi. The two countries discussed the issue of cybersecurity during Sisi's visit to India in January 2023 as well.

SHARING EXPERTISE AND CAPABILITY ENHANCEMENT

Egypt has expressed its interest in buying India's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas. A team from Egypt visited Aero India 2013 in Bengaluru and has reportedly projected a requirement for Tejas aircraft.²⁶ Besides, during the Egyptian President's visit to India in January 2023, Egypt discussed the possibility of procuring Akash missiles, radars, anti-airfield systems and military helicopters.²⁷ Further, Egypt is keen to buy the BrahMos missile system from India as well. Both countries have agreed to undertake joint manufacturing, research and development in defence.

As both countries have realised the importance of deepening defence and security cooperation, in recent years there has been a greater focus on cooperation in the fields of training and capability enhancement by sharing each other's experience and expertise in different fields. There have been a number of visits by senior defence and military officials from both sides, which further provides a boost to cooperation—both at the political as well as military and tactical levels.

Both countries have established the India–Egypt Joint Defence Committee (JDC). The JDC meets every year to discuss the pertinent issues and concerns from both sides. The bilateral mechanism was first established in 2006. In this regard, the 9th JDC meeting was held in November 2019 in Cairo. The joint statement issued at the end of President Sisi's visit to India in January 2023 mentioned the progress of implementation of the deliberations made in the 9th JDC meeting.²⁸ It was also mentioned that both sides are looking forward to the next round of meetings to be held in New Delhi.

Participating in each other's defence exhibition programmes has been an important aspect of understanding and collaboration between the two countries. Besides the military-to-military joint exercises, a number of defence organisations have also interacted to further deepen the cooperation. In December 2018, India's Bharat Electronics Limited participated in the first defence exhibition (EDEX 2018) in Cairo. A delegation from Indian Shipyards visited Egypt in December 2017. A high-level delegation from India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) visited Egypt in November 2014. A delegation from the Egyptian National Security Council visited India in 2016. Further, the Director of the Egyptian military intelligence department led a delegation to India in July 2017. These visits

focused on understanding each other's capabilities to cooperate and different aspects of defence and security cooperation. They have also helped to consolidate the trust between the two countries to cooperate over defence and security issues.

The India–Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) has been an important forum for discussion at a multilateral level. India intends to engage with the African countries in the defence and security fields. As Africa is a maritime neighbour, India intends to engage in security cooperation, including fighting piracy, terrorism and criminal activities. India believes that the security of India and Africa are closely related. Further, India has rejected the hierarchical world order and has reached out to the African countries as equal partners. Speaking at the IADD in Gandhinagar, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called the African countries as important stakeholders in the Indian Ocean security. He also stated that the Indian defence industry can work with the defence industry of African countries to fulfil their requirements.²⁹ Egypt has been participating in the IADD and is an important country in India's policy towards Africa.

BUILDING A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

India's relations with Egypt have received renewed attention under the Modi government. Not only have the bilateral political and diplomatic relations strengthened, but the initiatives towards a stronger defence and security cooperation have also crystallised significantly. This has been reflected in the recent high-level bilateral visits and agreements signed between the two countries.

Egyptian President Sisi was invited as the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in 2023. During his visit, a number of agreements were signed between the two countries. Both countries agreed to strengthen cooperation between their defence industries and exchange defence technology.³⁰ This is a reflection of growing trust in engaging in the defence sector between the two. Also, both countries agreed to further deepen the military-to-military engagements through 'training, joint exercises, transits and high-level bilateral visits'.³¹ During Sisi's visit, both countries decided to elevate their relationship to the level of 'strategic partnership'.³² Declaration to upgrade their relationship to strategic partnership will positively contribute towards strengthening defence and security cooperation between the two.

Modi visited Egypt in June 2023 and met with President Sisi. Their discussions focused mainly on further enhancing economic, defence and

security cooperation between the two countries.³³ In a major boost to the relationship, both countries also signed a ‘Strategic Partnership’ agreement, which they had agreed to in January 2023 during President Sisi’s visit to India. During Sisi’s visit in 2016, India and Egypt agreed to strengthen defence and security cooperation. Both countries agreed to deepen their engagement in areas such as defence trade, training, capacity building, exchange of information to combat terrorism, cooperation on cybersecurity, fighting drug trafficking, transnational crimes and money laundering.³⁴

Earlier, in September 2022, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited Egypt and met with President Sisi and Defence Minister Mohamed Ahmed Zaki and held a wide range of discussions on the defence cooperation between the two countries. During his visit, India and Egypt signed a defence cooperation agreement. This agreement intends to further bolster the India–Egypt defence and security cooperation and explore new areas of cooperation between the two. Rajnath Singh also visited the Cairo West Airbase. Rajnath Singh’s visit was followed by External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar’s visit to Cairo in October 2022. He met with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry and discussed a number of issues of bilateral mutual interest, including further strengthening defence and security cooperation between the two countries. Such frequent high-level exchanges of visits and deliberations on issues of mutual concern have contributed significantly to establishing a strategic partnership between the two countries.

Apart from the issue of terrorism and economic cooperation, as mentioned earlier, there is a growing convergence between India and Egypt on a number of global issues. Both are prominent countries of the Global South. As India assumed the Presidency of G20 in December 2022, it invited Egypt, among other countries, as a Guest Country to participate in the meetings. G20 themes such as the reform of multilateral institutions, sustainable development goals, climate change, energy security, food security, etc., are among some of the crucial issues that Cairo has taken seriously and expressed its interest in working with India. Several ministers from Egypt have participated in the G20 meeting held in India during its presidency.³⁵ Consensus on these critical global issues helps in further strengthening bilateral relations.

Besides, India and Egypt share similar opinions on the issue of climate change. Egypt is concerned about severe droughts, growing desertification and increasing sea level of the Mediterranean because of climate change.³⁶ Egypt also plays a key role in unifying the African countries on the issue of climate change. Both India and Egypt are taking important initiatives and

raising the voices of the Global South on the issue of climate change.³⁷ In 2021, President Sisi participated in the Heads of State and Government on Climate Change held virtually on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meeting. He stated that the developed countries should take responsibility to reduce emissions, which will alleviate the burdens of the developing countries.³⁸ Egypt hosted the 27th COP-27 at Sharm El Sheikh in November 2022 on behalf of the African continent. In March 2018, Egypt signed the International Solar Alliance (ISA),³⁹ which is yet another opportunity for both countries to work together in this field. The convergence of interests and objectives of both countries in these areas in the recent past has brought them to build a strategic partnership agreement between them.

CONSTRAINTS

Although there seems to be seriousness on the part of both countries to engage in deeper defence and security cooperation, there are certain limitations as well that would constrain the pace and scope of the engagement. The constraints are more economic and technological in nature rather than political and diplomatic. India and Egypt, under the leadership of Modi and Sisi respectively, have overcome the political inhibitions of the previous decades, but questions of economic and technological capability remain crucial.

In the defence cooperation agreement signed in 2022, both countries have agreed to jointly produce weapons. However, joint production remains the most difficult challenge at present. While both countries have old defence industries, they are lagging behind in terms of the modernisation of their armed forces. While India has done relatively better in terms of advancing its military technology, Egypt has not been able to maintain its momentum. Egypt has had a strong defence industry in the past, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁰ However, due to the internal political and economic situation and its involvement in regional conflicts and dependence on the West for imports, its domestic defence industry could not progress and, as a result, remains dated today. It imports a large quantity of weapons from other countries to meet its requirements. It would require a significant amount of financial resources and technical know-how to revive its domestic defence industry.

Because of the continuous internal challenges, Egypt's economy has been faltering with growing inflation and depreciation of the Egyptian pound.⁴¹

Therefore, Egypt's capability to invest in any joint production would remain weak. Similarly, Egypt lacks the required human resources for modernising its defence industry. Therefore, developing technology in order to jointly produce modern weapons required for the two big militaries would remain a big challenge for India–Egypt defence and security cooperation. Both countries need to invest more in research and development, particularly in the technology field.

Uninterrupted political engagement and trust at the highest level are necessary to maintain such deep defence and security ties. It also requires an unwavering commitment and a common vision of regional and global issues. As has been witnessed in the past, changes in government and leadership in Cairo or Delhi have posed challenges to the advancement of bilateral relations. Continued interaction bolsters the foundation upon which the defence and security ties are built, thus mitigating the risks of setbacks that can arise from changes in leadership dynamics. Therefore, a continuous dialogue at the highest level between the two countries is imperative to ensure progress in defence and security cooperation.

CONCLUSION

Defence and security cooperation between India and Egypt has received renewed attention in recent years. Both countries have realised the importance of joining hands to further cooperate and collaborate over issues such as joint production, training, joint exercises and sharing each other's best practices in the fields of defence and military. Military-to-military cooperation has also taken deeper root in recent years. The success of military-to-military cooperation has been reflected in the frequent visits of Indian naval ships to Egypt and the interaction between the air forces of both countries. As terrorism has emerged as a common threat to both countries, they have found a convergence of interest to cooperate on efforts to counter the menace. In fact, both countries have agreed to share their experience and expertise in countering terror. Sharing information about the activities of different terrorist groups, their modus operandi, ideology, networks as well as financing are some of the most important issues that both countries have agreed to cooperate in future. There are enormous possibilities for further cooperation between the two countries on issues related to defence and security. As the situation in the neighbourhood of both countries continues to remain tense with multiple security challenges from non-state actors, both countries have found it mutually beneficial to join hands. A strong political

will to carry forward the initiatives that have been taken in recent years is necessary from both sides to fully realise the potential of cooperation between the two countries. There lies a huge potential for cooperation in future if the momentum of the initiatives is continued with sustained political will and shared interests.

While the defence and security cooperation between India and Egypt has continued to exist in the past, it has strengthened or plateaued at different points in time depending on the nature of political cooperation at the highest level between the two countries. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and President Sisi, India and Egypt have identified several common bilateral and regional issues that have provided a platform for cooperation. With a particular focus on defence and security cooperation, both nations have agreed to expand the scope and substance of their relationship. This has the potential to rekindle the golden era of India–Egypt relations, as the engagement between the two countries continues to accelerate.

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