

"Indo-U.S. Relations in the Coming Decade: Impact of the Trump Era and Future Prospects"

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Abstract

The Indo-U.S. relationship has evolved significantly over the past few decades, and the period during Donald Trump's presidency (2016-2020) marked a crucial chapter in this bilateral engagement. Trump's tenure was characterized by a transactional approach, focusing on economic imbalances, defence cooperation, and strategic alignment against shared global challenges, especially China. Despite occasional tensions, particularly over trade tariffs and immigration policies, both countries worked to strengthen their strategic and economic ties. The growing defence partnership, through joint military exercises and collaborations like the Quad, highlighted their shared security interests, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Looking ahead to the next decade, the Indo-U.S. relationship is expected to remain a key pillar of both countries' foreign policies, underpinned by deepening economic ties, technological cooperation, and regional security collaboration. While trade relations may face challenges due to ongoing negotiations on tariffs and market access, the potential for growth in sectors such as digital trade, clean energy, and infrastructure remains high. Additionally, both nations will continue to counter the rising influence of China, which has emerged as a central focus of their strategic alignment.

As global issues such as climate change, cybersecurity, and technological innovation become increasingly important, the U.S. and India will likely deepen their cooperation in these areas. India's role as a global leader in renewable energy and technology will complement U.S. interests in sustainable development. The relationship will also navigate the complexities

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of democratic values and human rights, where differing approaches may continue to surface.

In sum, the Indo-U.S. partnership, strengthened during the Trump era, is set to expand in the coming decade, with both countries aiming for a more cooperative and dynamic relationship that balances mutual interests with regional and global challenges.

Keywords: Strategic Alignment, Bilateral Engagement and Economic Ties.

Introduction

History of Indo-U.S. Relations

The history of Indo-U.S. relations spans over two centuries, marked by periods of cooperation, tension, and strategic alignment, with the relationship evolving in response to global political, economic, and security dynamics.

Early Engagement (1776–1947):

India and the United States first established diplomatic ties in 1776, when the U.S. gained independence. However, significant interaction was limited during the colonial period in India. In the early 20th century, Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi sought American support for India's independence movement. While the U.S. supported decolonization globally, it had little direct involvement in India's struggle for freedom.

Post-Independence Era (1947–1960s):

Following India's independence in 1947, the U.S. and India initially shared common democratic values, but their relationship was complicated by Cold War politics. India, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted a policy of non-alignment, which meant it sought to avoid aligning with either the U.S. or the Soviet Union. Despite this, the U.S. provided economic aid to India in the 1950s, and the two countries cooperated on issues like trade and education.

However, tensions grew during the 1960s due to U.S. support for Pakistan during the 1965 India-Pakistan war and differing views on the Vietnam War.

Cold War Rivalry and Strategic Divergence (1970s–1980s):

During the Cold War, Indo-U.S. relations were further strained by India's nuclear ambitions and the U.S.'s close ties with Pakistan. In 1974, India conducted its first nuclear test, which led to international condemnation and strained relations with the U.S., which had a policy of non-proliferation. The relationship continued to be tense throughout the 1970s and 1980s, despite some economic and educational exchanges. However, the 1980s saw a shift as both countries realized the strategic value of cooperation, particularly in terms of countering Soviet influence in the region.

End of the Cold War and Growing Cooperation (1990s):

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 created new opportunities for India and the U.S. to engage more closely. The 1990s saw a gradual thaw in relations, driven by economic liberalization in India and the end of the Cold War. The U.S. viewed India as an important emerging market, while India sought to improve ties with the West, particularly for economic development. The relationship became more focused on trade, investment, and technological cooperation.

Nuclear Test and Sanctions (1998):

A pivotal moment came in 1998 when India conducted a series of nuclear tests, which led to U.S. sanctions under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act. This event temporarily derailed the relationship, as the U.S. criticized India's nuclear program, and sanctions were imposed. However, this was a turning point that ultimately set the stage for future cooperation, as both countries began to see the strategic value in closer ties.

The 2000s: Strategic Partnership and Defence Ties:

The early 2000s saw a major shift in Indo-U.S. relations. In 2000, President Bill Clinton's visit to India marked a significant step toward improving ties. In

2005, President George W. Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed a landmark civilian nuclear agreement, which ended decades of diplomatic isolation for India in the nuclear arena. The deal allowed India to access civilian nuclear technology from the U.S. in exchange for placing its nuclear facilities under international safeguards. This agreement symbolized the deepening of strategic, political, and defence cooperation between the two countries.

Obama Administration (2009–2017):

The relationship continued to strengthen under President Barack Obama, who identified India as a key partner in Asia and globally. In 2010, Obama made a state visit to India, emphasizing the growing partnership between the two countries in trade, security, and counterterrorism. Under Obama, both nations worked to expand defence cooperation, with India becoming a key partner in U.S. efforts to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific. Obama also supported India's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, reflecting the growing alignment in global governance.

Trump Administration (2017–2021):

Under President Donald Trump, Indo-U.S. relations underwent a shift toward a more transactional approach. Trump emphasized economic cooperation and trade issues, often focusing on reducing the trade deficit between the two countries. While the administration pursued closer defence ties and counterterrorism collaboration, the "America First" rhetoric led to some trade friction, including tariff disputes and the withdrawal of India's preferential trade status. Despite these tensions, the defence and security relationship remained strong, with growing collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in countering China. Trump's tenure also saw a strengthening of the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) involving India, the U.S., Japan, and Australia.

Biden Administration (2021–Present):

With President Joe Biden taking office in 2021, the Indo-U.S. relationship has continued to evolve, focusing on shared concerns like climate change, global health, and the challenges posed by China. Biden's administration has emphasized strengthening multilateral institutions, including the Quad, and deepening cooperation in technology, clean energy, and global health. The U.S. has supported India during its COVID-19 crisis, providing vaccine supplies and medical aid. The two countries are expected to continue their focus on defence and economic partnerships, with India emerging as a crucial ally in the Indo-Pacific strategy.

Impact of Indo-US Relation on world

The Indo-U.S. relationship has had a profound and far-reaching impact on global geopolitics, economics, and security dynamics. As two of the world's largest democracies and growing global powers, their bilateral ties influence not only their respective regions but also have significant implications for international relations. Here's how the evolving Indo-U.S. relationship impacts the world:

1. Global Security and Geopolitics

Strategic Counterbalance to China: One of the most significant impacts of the Indo-U.S. relationship has been its role in shaping the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region. Both countries share concerns over China's growing influence, especially in areas like the South China Sea, Taiwan, and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The U.S. and India's cooperation through forums like the **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)**—which also includes Japan and Australia—has created a strategic alignment aimed at countering China's assertiveness in the region. This alignment has shifted regional security dynamics, with India becoming a key player in U.S. regional strategies to maintain a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."

Global Defence Cooperation: The growing defence and security partnership between the U.S. and India has had global repercussions. The U.S. has become

a critical supplier of advanced defence technology to India, bolstering India's military capabilities. This cooperation also extends to counterterrorism efforts and the shared intelligence network, providing stability in a volatile region. The expansion of military exercises and joint operations also enhances the global security environment by creating more avenues for collective responses to international threats.

2. Economic Influence

Promoting Trade and Investment: The Indo-U.S. economic relationship has transformed into one of the most important bilateral economic partnerships in the world. India is the **world's fifth-largest economy** and is an attractive market for U.S. businesses. The flow of trade, investment, and technology has global ripple effects, with both countries benefitting from increased market access. The growing economic ties between India and the U.S. have facilitated the growth of a globalized digital economy, with both countries leading in tech innovation and development.

Supply Chain and Technology Collaboration: The Indo-U.S. relationship is pivotal in shaping global supply chains, particularly in the technology sector. India's robust tech industry, particularly in IT services and software development, has long been a cornerstone of U.S. businesses, while the U.S. is a major source of advanced technology and investment in India. In areas like **artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, and space technology**, both nations have cooperated to set global standards and drive forward innovations that influence industries worldwide.

Trade Agreements and Global Economic Norms: Indo-U.S. trade agreements and negotiations contribute to shaping global trade norms. While issues such as trade imbalances, tariffs, and market access still pose challenges, the overall trend of collaboration promotes stability in global trade. As both countries continue to expand trade agreements and partnerships, especially in emerging industries like green energy and digital trade, their economic influence will be increasingly felt on the global stage.

3. Global Health and Climate Change

Collaborative Health Initiatives: The partnership between India and the U.S. has played a key role in shaping global responses to health crises. For instance, during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the U.S. supported India with medical supplies, vaccines, and aid. Furthermore, India's pharmaceutical industry, one of the world's largest producers of generic drugs, is critical in providing affordable medicines globally. This collaboration enhances the global health system and strengthens the ability to address pandemics and health emergencies.

Climate Change Cooperation: As the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, Indo-U.S. cooperation is vital. India, as a developing nation, faces unique climate challenges, and its role in global climate negotiations is crucial. The U.S. and India have increasingly cooperated on clean energy and sustainability initiatives, with the **U.S.-India Clean Energy Finance Forum** and commitments to renewable energy targets. Their collaboration can influence global climate action, as both nations work together to develop and deploy clean technologies that can be scaled globally.

4. Influence in Multilateral Institutions

Strengthening Global Institutions: Both India and the U.S. are influential players in multilateral organizations such as the **United Nations, World Trade Organization (WTO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. The growing Indo-U.S. partnership strengthens these institutions, ensuring that global governance structures are more representative of emerging powers. India's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, supported by the U.S., represents a push toward reforming international organizations to reflect the new geopolitical realities of the 21st century.

Humanitarian and Development Cooperation: Through their partnership, India and the U.S. are also contributing to global development initiatives, particularly in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East. Both countries share interests in improving access to education, healthcare, and sustainable development in developing nations, which has implications for global poverty

alleviation efforts and the achievement of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

5. Cultural and People-to-People Ties

Educational and Cultural Exchanges: The Indo-U.S. relationship is also significantly shaped by people-to-people connections. The Indian diaspora in the U.S. has had a major influence on American society and economy, contributing to sectors such as technology, medicine, and business. The cultural exchange between the two nations also has a global impact, as Bollywood, Indian cuisine, and other cultural exports have become increasingly popular worldwide, contributing to global cultural diversity.

Educational Partnerships: The U.S. remains a top destination for Indian students seeking higher education, with over a million Indian students studying in the U.S. annually. This exchange fosters global intellectual cooperation, contributing to global research and development in various fields, including technology, medicine, and engineering.

The Indo-U.S. relationship is a defining factor in shaping the global order in the 21st century. Through strategic cooperation in security, trade, technology, climate change, and global governance, both nations have enhanced their influence on the world stage. Their partnership offers a counterbalance to regional and global challenges, particularly from China, and presents a vision of democratic cooperation for a more stable and prosperous global future. As the world becomes more interconnected, the continued evolution of Indo-U.S. relations will have an outsized impact on global affairs, setting the tone for key global issues, from economic growth to climate action and international peace.

Indo-U.S. Relations in the Present Scenario

As of the current decade, Indo-U.S. relations have reached a phase of unprecedented depth and complexity, characterized by cooperation across a wide range of areas, including defence, trade, technology, climate change, and global governance. The strategic partnership between the two countries has grown rapidly, driven by shared democratic values, economic interests, and

common regional and global challenges, particularly the rise of China. However, the relationship is not without its challenges, including trade disputes, human rights concerns, and diverging national priorities. Below is an analysis of Indo-U.S. relations in the present context:

1. Defence and Strategic Cooperation

Defence Partnership: Indo-U.S. defence ties have seen significant advancements, with India emerging as a key partner in the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. This collaboration is underscored by joint military exercises, defence technology exchanges, and the signing of key agreements such as the **COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement)** and **LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement)**, which facilitate logistical support and communications between the two militaries. India's participation in the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)** with the U.S., Japan, and Australia is another critical element, aimed at maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific, countering China's increasing assertiveness in the region.

Counterterrorism Cooperation: The U.S. and India continue to cooperate closely on counterterrorism, with both countries sharing intelligence and conducting joint operations to combat terrorism, especially in the context of regional instability in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

2. Economic and Trade Relations

Bilateral Trade Growth: The economic relationship between India and the U.S. has seen significant growth, with the U.S. being one of India's largest trading partners. The two countries have seen trade in goods and services expanding across a variety of sectors, including technology, pharmaceuticals, energy, and agriculture. The ongoing trade negotiations, however, still feature disputes over issues such as tariffs, intellectual property, and market access.

Technology and Innovation: The tech sector remains a cornerstone of Indo-U.S. relations, with India being a critical player in global IT services and the U.S. leading in cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence,

cybersecurity, and space exploration. The **Biden administration** has focused on fostering further collaboration in emerging technologies, including quantum computing, 5G networks, and clean energy solutions. U.S. companies, particularly in Silicon Valley, continue to invest heavily in India's tech ecosystem, contributing to the global digital economy.

Investment Flows: Indian companies are increasingly investing in the U.S., while American companies are continuing to make inroads into India, drawn by its large consumer market and growing economy. Both countries are likely to continue to explore opportunities for increased investment and trade as they expand their economic cooperation.

3. Geopolitical Alignment in the Indo-Pacific

Balancing China's Rise: One of the most significant aspects of current Indo-U.S. relations is the shared concern over China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Both countries are committed to maintaining a **rules-based international order**, free from coercion. The **Quad** initiative, which focuses on regional security, infrastructure development, and shared democratic values, is a key platform for this cooperation. The U.S. supports India's efforts to maintain sovereignty in contested areas like the **Indian Ocean** and the **South China Sea**, where China has sought to assert dominance.

Regional Security Issues: India's geopolitical position makes it a key player in the U.S. strategy for the Indo-Pacific. In recent years, India has become increasingly aligned with the U.S. in its regional security policies, particularly in countering China's military and economic activities in the region. This alignment is not only strategic but also economic, as both nations seek to maintain free trade routes and prevent regional destabilization by China.

4. Climate Change and Environmental Cooperation

Climate Change Action: Climate change remains a priority for both nations. India, as one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, has an important role to play in global efforts to combat climate change, and its cooperation with the U.S. is critical. The Biden administration's commitment to re-joining the **Paris**

Agreement was a significant moment in Indo-U.S. environmental relations. India and the U.S. have also collaborated on clean energy initiatives, particularly in solar power, with the U.S. supporting India's goal of installing **500 GW of renewable energy** by 2030.

Green Energy: India and the U.S. are jointly working on **green hydrogen projects** and other clean energy technologies that could have a significant impact on the global transition to sustainable energy. The **U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership** is a key vehicle for this cooperation, aiming to accelerate the transition to a clean energy future.

5. Health and Global Challenges

COVID-19 Response and Public Health: The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of Indo-U.S. cooperation in global health. The U.S. provided significant medical aid to India during its devastating second wave of COVID-19 in 2021, including ventilators, vaccines, and oxygen supplies. Both countries have also collaborated in vaccine development and distribution, with India playing a central role as a global vaccine manufacturer. Moving forward, both nations are likely to continue cooperating on global health security, particularly in terms of preparedness for future pandemics.

Global Health Initiatives: India's strong pharmaceutical industry and its leadership in global vaccine production make it a key partner for the U.S. in addressing global health challenges, particularly in developing countries.

6. Human Rights and Democratic Values

Human Rights Concerns: While the U.S. and India share democratic values, tensions occasionally arise over issues such as religious freedom, press freedom, and the treatment of minorities. The Biden administration has expressed concerns over certain domestic policies in India, including the controversial **Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)** and issues related to freedom of expression. However, both countries have continued to emphasize their shared commitment to democratic principles and human rights in international forums.

Support for Global Democracy: Both nations play a prominent role in supporting democracy around the world, particularly in the face of rising authoritarianism. This mutual commitment is likely to influence their future cooperation in multilateral institutions such as the **United Nations**, the **World Trade Organization**, and the **World Health Organization**.

Discussions

The Indo-U.S. defence relationship has been one of the most visible and enduring components of their partnership. The **Indo-Pacific** region is central to both nations' security strategies, especially with the rising influence of China. The U.S. and India have moved closer to each other with strategic military agreements like **COMCASA** and **LEMOA**, which enable deeper defence cooperation, intelligence sharing, and logistical support. The **Quad**—comprising India, the U.S., Japan, and Australia—is seen as a vital strategic framework to promote regional security and counterbalance China's growing assertiveness.

While the Indo-U.S. defence collaboration is robust, there are discussions about how to balance this relationship with India's strategic autonomy. India has long maintained a non-aligned stance in foreign policy, and while the U.S. is a key partner, India continues to engage with other countries, including Russia, for defence supplies and geopolitical interests. The growing defence ties with the U.S. may raise concerns about potential tensions with other global players, particularly Russia and China.

Indo-U.S. relations in the present scenario reflect a partnership that is expanding in both breadth and depth. From defence to trade, climate change to health, and global governance to technology, the two nations are cooperating on a wide array of global issues. While challenges remain, particularly in trade and human rights, the mutual benefits of this partnership are clear. The relationship between India and the U.S.

is set to play a crucial role in shaping the geopolitical, economic, and security landscape of the 21st century. As both nations navigate their respective domestic and international challenges, their collaboration is likely to continue to grow, influencing not only their own futures but also the trajectory of global affairs.

Conclusion

The Indo-U.S. relationship has experienced notable evolution in the post-Trump era, continuing to deepen and broaden across various sectors. While the Trump administration focused on an "America First" approach, often emphasizing trade imbalances and pushing for a more transactional relationship, the post-Trump period, particularly under the Biden administration, has witnessed a resurgence in cooperation marked by shared global priorities, democratic values, and a commitment to addressing common challenges. This shift represents a pivotal moment for Indo-U.S. relations, with both countries recognizing the strategic, economic, and geopolitical importance of their partnership.

One of the most significant aspects of the current relationship is the reaffirmation of mutual strategic interests, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. As tensions with China continue to shape global geopolitics, India and the U.S. have strengthened their defence and security cooperation, particularly through initiatives like the **Quad**, which includes Japan and Australia. This multilateral framework has become increasingly central to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific, addressing both regional and global security concerns. The defence agreements signed under both the Trump and Biden administrations have laid the groundwork for deeper military ties, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism efforts, contributing to regional stability.

Economically, the Indo-U.S. relationship has continued to thrive. Trade, investment, and technological collaboration have remained strong, with both nations benefiting from increased economic exchange. India's role as a hub for global information technology services and the U.S.'s leadership in innovation and advanced technologies have created fertile ground for continued growth.

However, the relationship faces challenges in areas such as tariffs, intellectual property, and market access, requiring ongoing negotiations and diplomatic engagement. The Biden administration's more multilateral approach has emphasized resolving these issues within the broader framework of international trade, ensuring that both sides remain committed to a fair and balanced economic partnership.

On the global stage, the post-Trump era has seen both countries reasserting their commitment to addressing pressing global challenges like climate change, public health, and sustainability. The U.S. re-joining the **Paris Agreement** and deepening its climate partnership with India reflects a shared determination to tackle environmental issues. Similarly, their cooperation in global health, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing health crises, with India playing a crucial role in vaccine production and distribution.

While challenges remain, particularly related to human rights concerns and domestic policies, the mutual respect for democratic values continues to guide the Indo-U.S. relationship. Under the Biden administration, both nations have reaffirmed their commitment to democratic governance, human rights, and rule-based international order. Their shared democratic values and commitment to a peaceful, stable, and prosperous world order continue to drive the relationship.

In conclusion, the Indo-U.S. relationship post-Trump is one of mutual growth, strategic alignment, and global impact. As both countries confront shared challenges—ranging from regional security to climate change and global health—their partnership will continue to play a critical role in shaping the future of global governance. With a focus on cooperation, dialogue, and shared values, the Indo-U.S. relationship will remain central to fostering global stability, economic prosperity, and a sustainable future in the years to come.

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