



Debates on the India-U.S. relations in the U.S. election year

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With the U.S. being India's trusted partner in shaping the development aspirations of 1.3 billion Indians, expanding cooperation beyond defence and energy is critical. India's expectation from the forthcoming U.S. administration is high, including for the relaxation in VISA restrictions as well as with regard to a deal on improving the two-way trade. However, taking into consideration the unprecedented churn of events in the U.S. domestic politics, it will be prudent for India to expect a mark of unpredictability in America's external postures in the coming years. This ONW reflects upon some of the ongoing happenings during an election year in the U.S. in the context of making of future India-U.S. relations.

News/Op-ed	Key Takeaway
<p>League of Nationalists By Shivshankar Menon Foreign Affairs September/October 2020</p>	<p>Under President Donald Trump, the United States' relations with many of its closest friends have deteriorated drastically. Since Trump took office, Washington's relations with New Delhi have gone from strength to strength. U.S.-Indian defense and intelligence cooperation has reached new heights, and the two countries have anchored their work on maritime security in new agreements. Bilateral trade has grown steadily. But the relationship between the world's two largest democracies is now also much narrower. Where India and the United States once collaborated on a wide range of issues in pursuit of common goals, they now cooperate on security to the exclusion of much else. For India, as well as the countries making a similar bet, this is a risky gamble: the very policies that create comity in the short run are eroding the foundations that will stabilize it over the long run.</p>
<p>Trump, Biden set to lock horns in crucial debate. Where will India figure and where does it stand? The Week September 29, 2020</p>	<p>This is expected to be the one point of complete convergence between Trump and Biden. Under Trump, as has been under successive US presidents since Bill Clinton, the bilateral relations have been on a steady uptick, peppered with moments of personal bonhomie between Trump and Modi. Biden has already placed himself as an enthusiastic supporter of the growing US-India relations. Geopolitically, the US counts on India as a reliable hedge in South Asia against China's growing clout and aggression. The two candidates are also well aware of the growing influence of Indian-Americans in key battleground states, and have placed big focus on canvassing support from the community.</p>

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<p>Future of US-India relations: COVID-19, China and diaspora factor <i>By Carl Jaison and Mrinmoy Deori Borah</i> Financial Express September 25, 2020</p>	<p>On the cultural front, the largely successful Indian-American diaspora has been acknowledged as being one of the driving forces behind the current bi-partisan support for India-U.S. ties in Washington D.C. In the context of the upcoming U.S. Presidential elections, it will be interesting to read the tea leaves with regard to the factors that are likely to feature prominently in the U.S.-India bilateral engagement.</p>
<p>Why Biden is better for Indian Americans and India-U.S. relations <i>By Atman M. Trivedi</i> The American Bazaar September 22, 2020</p>	<p>Trump's appeal to a narrow political base has caused him to turn his back on our history as a nation of immigrants. Since he took office, Indian Americans from all backgrounds have encountered growing xenophobia. Many of us have at one point or another been told to "go back to your country," but I never imagined hearing that sentiment from the President of the United States. Biden's America always has a place for Indian Americans. The vice president has committed to work on immigration reforms that prioritize keeping Indian families together and provide a pathway to citizenship for more than 500,000 residents from India.</p>
<p>India-US strategic energy partnership takes deep roots: Amb Sandhu ET EnergyWorld September 18, 2020</p>	<p>The strategic energy partnership between India and America has taken deep roots in a short span of time. The US remains a critical partner for India in meeting the development aspirations of 1.3 billion people, India's ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu said, adding that there is no field of human endeavour where both India and the US are not cooperating. "A timely and appropriate initiative from the US government will go a long way in restoring the confidence of Indian LNG buyers in the US projects, and would help greater LNG import growth in coming years," he said.</p>
<p>U.S.-India Insight: Time to Expand America's Footprint in India <i>By Richard M. Rossow</i> CSIS News September 16, 2020</p>	<p>Amid a period of heightened tensions between India and China, the United States is looking at ways to show support for India. For understandable reasons, defense cooperation comes to mind as the most obvious way to highlight the emerging U.S.-India partnership. People-to-people connections between the United States and India remain a fundamental element of the U.S.-India relationship. Expanding the U.S. diplomatic presence in India is pivotal to building stronger bridges with India's powerful regional political parties.</p>
<p>India, US sign statement of intent to strengthen dialogue on defence tech cooperation The Economic Times September 15, 2020</p>	<p>India and the US on Tuesday, 15th September, signed a statement of intent to strengthen the bilateral dialogue on defence technology co-operation and create opportunities for co-production and co-development of military equipment. The statement was signed by Raj Kumar, Secretary, Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, and Ellen Lord, US Under Secretary of Defence for Acquisition and Sustainment, during the 10th Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) Group Meeting that was held virtually.</p>

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<p>Trump vs Biden: four more years of chaos vs four years of calm, compassion <i>By Frank F. Islam</i> The American Bazaar September 15, 2020</p>	<p>Biden has been a friend of India throughout his Senate career and tenure as vice president. As chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he was a supporter of the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal. He is also in favor of more trade with India, with less protectionism. His position on H-1B and immigration is more aligned with India than Trump's. If past is prologue, India-U.S. relations would fare much better under Biden than Trump.</p>
<p>Indo-US Relations under a Biden Presidency and the Kamala Harris Factor <i>By Tridivesh Singh Maini</i> Future Directions International September 15, 2020</p>	<p>One country which is closely watching Biden's statements is India. Biden as Vice-President pushed for closer ties with India. It would be pertinent to point out that, as a Senator, he supported the Indo-US Nuclear Deal. More recently, Biden's recent announcement regarding his running mate has drawn immense attention. Kamala Harris, who is of half-Indian descent, will make history if Biden is elected to office in November, by being the first woman as well as the first Asian/African-American Vice-President. In her first speech since the announcement, Harris spoke about her Indian mother.</p>
<p>Trade deal with US unlikely before November presidential elections: India The Economic Times September 10, 2020</p>	<p>The India-US mini trade deal is unlikely to see the light of day before the presidential elections in the US in November, officials said even though New Delhi has made a proposal on a limited trade package and shared it with Washington. The two aim for a free trade agreement (FTA) in the long run and have been working on an initial trade deal for almost two years amid a plethora of bilateral issues ranging from medical devices, agriculture, Harley Davidson motorbikes, e-commerce, totalisation pact, visa issues and disputes at the World Trade Organization.</p>
<p>As the race for the 2020 White House intensifies, Republican Trump and Democrat Biden vie for India-American votes <i>By Dr. Ashok Sharma</i> The Times of India September 10, 2020</p>	<p>With the November 3 election day closing in, the Republicans and Democrats, sensing a close contest, are leaving no stone unturned to woo Indian-American voters while holding on to their hardcore bases of support. 1.3 million Indian-American votes in the eight swing states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin, are being considered as decisive. Despite his obsession for bringing tariff issues in his bilateral dealings, President Trump has not only continued with all the efforts made by his predecessors but has elevated the US-India strategic partnership to a comprehensive global partnership.</p>
<p>The Joe Biden Worldview and its Implications for India News 18 September 09, 2020</p>	<p>The Biden campaign has construed their candidate as someone who would restore America's place "back at the head of the table." As with his promise to "return to normalcy" on the domestic front, Biden's foreign policy agenda also seems to be "looking at an across-the-board restoration project". From the standpoint of US-India ties, if Biden wins, he would be the third US president that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would do business with. However, in addition to Biden's time as Barack Obama's vice president, he is seen as an old hand on Washington's relations with New Delhi.</p>

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<p>Trump may finally be close to fulfilling 2016 poll promise of an H-1B visa overhaul The Economic Times September 05, 2020</p>	<p>On Thursday, 3rd September, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) submitted a regulation to amend what jobs would qualify for the high-skill visa category to the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. This is typically the last step before the regulation is made open to the public for comments. The rule said that the ‘DHS will propose to revise the definition of specialty occupation to increase focus on obtaining the best and the brightest foreign nationals via the H-1B program, and revise the definition of employment and employer-employee relationship to better protect U.S. workers and wages. In addition, DHS will propose additional requirements designed to ensure employers pay appropriate wages to H-1B visa holders.’</p>
<p>2 Million Hindus Key Voting Bloc In Swing States, Says US Congressman NDTV September 04, 2020</p>	<p>The two million Hindus in the United States are a vital and key voting bloc in several swing states this presidential elections, Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said as he told fellow community members that it was their dharma to exercise their franchise. "I feel it is so important to elect Joe Biden because of a Hindu value "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (entire world is a family) a core tenant of Hindus - we believe in treating everyone with dignity and respect," he said. "This year is the most important election of our lifetime before us. In 60 days, on November 3rd, believe it or not, the two million Hindu, Americans in this country will be a vital and key voting bloc in several swing states.</p>
<p>US Indo-Pacific strategy can't succeed without India, says top American diplomat Financial Express September 01, 2020</p>	<p>The new Indo-Pacific strategy, which reflects the realities of the modern world, is focused around democracies, free markets and the values that India and its people share with the US and its people, Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun said in his remarks at the US-India Strategic Forum during the third India US Leadership Summit. The two countries are in the process of seeking an even broader economic relationship, including through some dimensions of trade liberalization, he said. They are also working very closely in the security sphere, with India clearly indicating recently an intention to invite Australia to participate in the Malabar naval exercises.</p>
<p>Joe Biden is strongest advocate for U.S.-India ties: Former U.S. Ambassador to India Richard Verma The Hindu August 30, 2020</p>	<p>This is someone who would restore a degree of stability and hope, inspiration and effectiveness in the bilateral relationship. He said in 2006, that if the U.S. and India are the closest friends and partners by 2020, the world will be a safer place. Five years ago, he is the one that set the goal of \$500 billion in two-way trade. And he and President Obama talked about this as being the defining partnership of the 21st century. So, if you are rooting for the U.S.-India partnership, I think you're going to find no stronger advocate than Joe Biden.</p>

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<p>Theatrics aside, Kamala Harris may help build on Trump’s India policy</p> <p>The Times of India August 28, 2020</p>	<p>The Trump administration has made India a key part of its “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” strategy, and backed Modi’s government following deadly clashes between Chinese and Indian troops along their disputed Himalayan border in June. India is also a key part of the informal regional grouping to counter China known as the Quad, which also includes the US, Japan and Australia. Still, the closer ties between the US and India are likely to persist in a Biden-Harris White House, said Amitabh Mattoo, a former member of India’s National Security Council Advisory Board.</p>
<p>India to be key American partner in Biden administration: Campaign official</p> <p>Deccan Herald August 16, 2020</p>	<p>A Biden administration would be an advocate for India to play a leading role in international institutions, including helping it get a seat on a reformed UN Security Council, a top campaign official has said, asserting that New Delhi has to be a key American partner in engaging China from a position of strength. During the Obama administration, we worked very hard to establish India as a key contributing member of the Indo-Pacific strategy. That includes India's role in working with likeminded partners to strengthen and uphold a rules-based order in the Indo Pacific in which no country, including China can threaten its neighbours with impunity.</p>
<p>Trump or Biden</p> <p><i>By C. Raja Mohan</i></p> <p>The Indian Express August 11, 2020</p>	<p>Unlike Beijing and Moscow, Delhi has no incentive to pick sides between Trump and Biden. It can deal productively with both. But Delhi is conscious of the current unprecedented churn in US domestic politics and the breakdown of the internal consensus on foreign and economic policies. India should, therefore, be prepared for a measure of unpredictability in America’s external orientation in the coming years.</p>
