

# The Impact of Donald Trump's New Regime on Indo-US Relations: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Political, Social, Military, and Diplomatic Aspects

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## Abstract:

This research paper examines the multifaceted impact of Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency on Indo-US relations, focusing on political, social, military, and diplomatic dimensions. While Trump's first term witnessed a warming of ties grounded in personal rapport with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and shared strategic interests, his second term has introduced complexities that strain the bilateral relationship. Key developments include a recalibrated U.S. approach toward Pakistan, shifts in defense cooperation, immigration policy challenges affecting Indian professionals, and evolving trade dynamics under Trump's "America First" agenda. This paper analyses these aspects to understand the trajectory of Indo-US relations amid global geopolitical turbulence and regional security concerns.

**Keywords:** Election, Indo US Relation, Indo US Trade, Trade

## Introduction:

The relationship between India and the United States is one of the most important and complex partnerships in the world today. These two countries are the world's largest democracies, and their relationship affects not only their own futures but also regional and global peace and progress. Over the decades, India and the US have moved from a cautious, sometimes distant relationship to a close partnership that covers many areas including politics, trade, defense, and culture. This transformation reflects how both have grown and adapted to changing global situations<sup>12</sup>.

India and the US have many shared values—like democracy, freedom, and economic growth—but also had differences in the past. Understanding this story of their ties helps us see why they cooperate closely now, what challenges they face, and how new developments, like recent changes in US leadership, might shape their future<sup>23</sup>.

## Historical Context of Indo-US Relations

### Early Years After Indian Independence (1947–1960s)

India became independent from British rule in 1947. Around this time, the world was entering the Cold War—a period marked by rivalry between two big powers: the United States and the Soviet Union. Countries had to choose sides, but India chose a different path. Under its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal

Nehru, India followed a policy called “non-alignment.” This meant not taking sides with either the US or the Soviet Union but staying neutral, trying to keep India’s own freedom to make choices<sup>45</sup>.

Nehru also helped start the Non-Aligned Movement, a group of countries that did not want to be pulled into Cold War conflicts. India wanted to focus on its own development and maintaining peace rather than joining military alliances. The US, on the other hand, was actively building alliances against the Soviet Union. In South Asia, the United States chose to be a strong ally of Pakistan, India’s neighbor and rival. This created tension between India and the US from the beginning<sup>67</sup>.

### **Strained Relations Over Conflicts**

In 1965 and 1971, India and Pakistan fought wars. The second war in 1971 was especially significant because Bangladesh was born after breaking away from Pakistan with India’s help. During these conflicts, the US supported Pakistan, which angry India greatly. As a result, India grew closer to the Soviet Union for military and diplomatic support<sup>78</sup>.

Despite these tensions, India and the US did maintain official diplomatic ties. There were also moments of cooperation, such as US humanitarian aid during India’s food shortages in the 1950s and limited assistance during India’s 1962 war with China. However, overall, this period was marked by mistrust and limited engagement between the two countries<sup>89</sup>.

### **Summary of Early Relationship**

To summarize the initial decades: India wanted to stay independent and neutral in global conflicts while the US was focused on its own Cold War goals. Differing alliances and policies kept the relationship cool and cautious despite some cooperation. The Cold War set the early tone for Indo-US relations<sup>69</sup>.

## **Post-Cold War Transformation and Strategic Partnership**

### **Global Changes in the 1990s**

The world changed drastically in the 1990s. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, ending the Cold War and leaving the United States as the single dominant global power. At the same time, India began opening up its economy after many years of strict government control. India’s reforms aimed to encourage growth, trade, and global connections<sup>1011</sup>.

With the old Cold War divisions gone, and both India and the US moving toward market economies and democratic governance, their interests started to align more. Both countries saw benefits in working together on economic development, regional peace, and democratic values<sup>112</sup>.

### **Civil Nuclear Agreement of 2008**

One of the most important symbols of the new relationship was the 2008 Civil Nuclear Agreement. Before this, India had not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a global pact to control the spread of nuclear weapons, so many countries limited nuclear trade with India. But the US recognized India’s growing global role and its responsible nuclear program<sup>1213</sup>.

The agreement allowed the US to share civilian nuclear technology with India, helping India meet its energy needs and grow economically. This deal also showed greater trust and opened the door for expanded cooperation in defense, technology sharing, and trade. It was a turning point that shifted the relationship from cautious to confident cooperation<sup>1213</sup>.

### **Strengthening Ties Under US Presidents Bush and Obama**

During the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, the Indo-US partnership deepened significantly. The US saw India as a key ally in fighting global terrorism, securing energy supplies, and

balancing China's rising power in Asia. The US designated India as a "Major Defense Partner," a special status that allowed closer military ties, arms sales, and shared technology<sup>13,14</sup>.

Both countries also worked together in multilateral groups like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), which includes the US, India, Japan, and Australia. This forum focuses on promoting peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, especially to counterbalance China's growing influence<sup>15</sup>.

## **The Trump Era: Continuity and Change**

### **New Leadership, New Style**

Donald Trump became US president in 2017 with a very different style. His "America First" policy emphasized putting American interests first, often by challenging existing trade deals and being more skeptical of international cooperation. This approach brought both opportunities and challenges to the Indo-US partnership<sup>16</sup>.

### **Positive Developments and Personal Rapport**

Despite Trump's unique style, the relationship with India remained largely positive. Trump and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi developed a strong personal rapport. High-profile events like "Howdy Modi" in Houston (a huge rally with both leaders in 2019) and "Namaste Trump" in Ahmedabad emphasized the warmth between the two leaders and their countries<sup>17</sup>.

The US continued to see India as a vital partner in resisting China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. They further strengthened military cooperation with new arms sales and joint exercises<sup>15,18</sup>.

### **Challenges in Economy and Immigration**

However, several challenges arose during the Trump years, especially in trade and immigration. Trump's tariffs and renegotiation of trade agreements created difficulties for businesses involved in US-India trade. His administration introduced stricter rules on immigration, especially for H-1B visas, which are heavily used by Indian professionals in the US technology sector. These policies made life harder for India's IT workers and companies that depend on skilled Indian employees<sup>18</sup>.

## **The New Regime under Trump: Emerging Dynamics (2025 and Beyond)**

### **Donald Trump Returns as President in 2025**

In 2025, Donald Trump was elected president again, bringing changes in US foreign policy that affect India. Early signals show that the US is reengaging more closely with Pakistan's military leadership. In June 2025, Trump met the Pakistani Army Chief General Asim Munir to discuss military aid and cooperation, including on issues related to Iran<sup>19</sup>.

This move surprised and worried many in India because it seemed to push US support for Pakistan at a time when India and Pakistan tensions remain high. Traditionally, the US avoided taking sides openly and did not interfere in the sensitive Kashmir dispute. But Trump publicly suggested the US could help mediate Kashmir talks, which India rejected strongly<sup>20</sup>.

### **Political and Military Challenges**

These new developments have created political tensions in the Indo-US relationship. India is concerned about whether the US's renewed attention to Pakistan means Washington's strategic partnership with New Delhi might weaken<sup>19</sup>.

At the same time, military cooperation between the US and India continues but could be complicated by these new ties with Pakistan. India watches carefully how arms sales, joint military exercises, and intelligence sharing evolve with these competing interests<sup>15</sup>.

### Economic and Social Impacts

On the economic side, Trump's "America First" policies still promote protectionism, which means buying American goods and protecting local industries from foreign competition. This could affect trade and investment opportunities between the US and India<sup>15</sup>.

Trump's tough immigration policies also continue impacting the Indian diaspora in the US. The Indian government has shown willingness to cooperate with US immigration enforcement, including helping return undocumented migrants to India, which affects many Indian families living abroad<sup>18</sup>.

### Diplomatic Uncertainty

Trump's leadership style is seen as unpredictable and transactional, changing deals based on what benefits the US administration most at any moment. This can challenge the steady growth of the Indo-US partnership seen in previous decades<sup>18</sup>.

Both countries now need to carefully manage the relationship, building on earlier successes while addressing new disagreements and uncertainties<sup>19</sup>.

### Importance of Studying the Impact

Understanding how Trump's new presidency affects Indo-US relations is very important for several reasons:

- **Regional Stability:** The Indo-US partnership is key to peace and security in South Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific region. Their cooperation affects regional powers like China and Pakistan, and can help prevent conflicts<sup>1619</sup>.
- **Economic Growth:** Trade, investment, and technology sharing between India and the US benefit millions of people. Changes in policy can impact businesses, jobs, and innovation in both countries<sup>1518</sup>.
- **Social Ties:** The Indian diaspora in the US is large and connected to both their homeland and American society. Immigration policies and diplomatic relations affect these communities deeply<sup>1820</sup>.
- **Geopolitical Lessons:** How personal diplomacy, national priorities, and domestic politics influence international relations provides an important lesson for policymakers and scholars worldwide. The Indo-US relationship is a clear example of how flexible and complex global partnerships can be<sup>120</sup>.

By closely watching how new US policies and leaders impact this relationship, both India and the US can prepare better strategies for cooperation and problem-solving in the future.

### Conclusion

The story of Indo-US relations is a journey from cautious and sometimes difficult beginnings to a strong, multi-dimensional partnership today. Historical differences shaped by the Cold War gradually made way for shared interests in democracy, security, trade, and global peace<sup>1</sup>.

While the Trump era, especially his second term starting in 2025, has brought new challenges — especially due to US engagement with Pakistan and a more transactional diplomatic style — the foundation of cooperation built over decades remains strong. Both countries understand the value of their relationship and the need to carefully navigate political, economic, and military complexities<sup>19</sup>.

Looking ahead, the Indo-US partnership will likely continue to evolve. It will require patience, dialogue, and compromise, but its importance to regional stability, economic prosperity, and global peace ensures that both nations will keep working together for a better future<sup>121</sup>.

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