



# US-India Relations Fact Sheet

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## WHY THE US-INDIA PARTNERSHIP MATTERS

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India is the world's largest country by population and boasts the fastest-growing major economy. Although India faces various growing pains, as well as some internal challenges, a strong US-India relationship should deliver the following:

- **Stronger defense and security postures for both countries across the Indo-Pacific region and Asia** India faces border challenges with China and is facing several of the same challenges in Central Asia that confront the United States. India is also rapidly changing its Middle East policy.
- **Healthier bilateral economic cooperation** Trade between two of the largest market economies on earth is rapidly growing—and continued to grow even with the new 50 percent tariff regime that came into place in 2025. The framework for a new trade deal has been announced, but details are still being finalized. Congressional action may be desirable to formalize a long-term trade agreement. Investment flows are also strong.
- **More people-to-people relations** Americans and Indians share values, and members of their diasporas have traditionally gotten along within their host countries. India is now home to more than one million American citizens. In the United States, the Indian diaspora is already the richest national origin group in the country, and its members are increasingly taking on prominent positions across government and the private sector. This success, combined with other political developments, has created a level of resentment among other Americans. Over time, diaspora issues are likely to become an important factor in the overall health of the US-India bilateral relationship.

## THE STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

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### AN EVOLVING STRATEGIC RATIONALE FOR THE US-INDIA PARTNERSHIP

The United States and India are not allies: Indian policymakers are averse to enter into formal alliances with other countries, and the US has had divergent interests in Asia. Nevertheless,

**TABLE 1** THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA AT A GLANCE

<b>Metric</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>India</b>
Population (2024)	Est. 340.1 million	Est. 1.45 billion
Land area	Est. 9.8 million km	Est 3.3 million km
GDP (nominal, 2025)	\$31.42 trillion	\$4.15 trillion
Real GDP growth (2025)	Est. 2.1%	Est. 6.5%
Political system	Federal presidential constitutional republic	Federal parliamentary constitutional republic

**Sources:** *US population:* US Census Bureau, “New 2024 Population Estimates Show Nation’s Population Grew by About 1% to 340.1 Million Since 2023,” December 19, 2024. *India population:* World Bank, “Population, Total—India,” accessed May 21, 2026. *Land area and political system:* Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, “United States” and “India,” last updated January 23, 2026. *GDP and real GDP growth:* International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: Global Economy in Flux, Prospects Remain Dim*, October 2025.

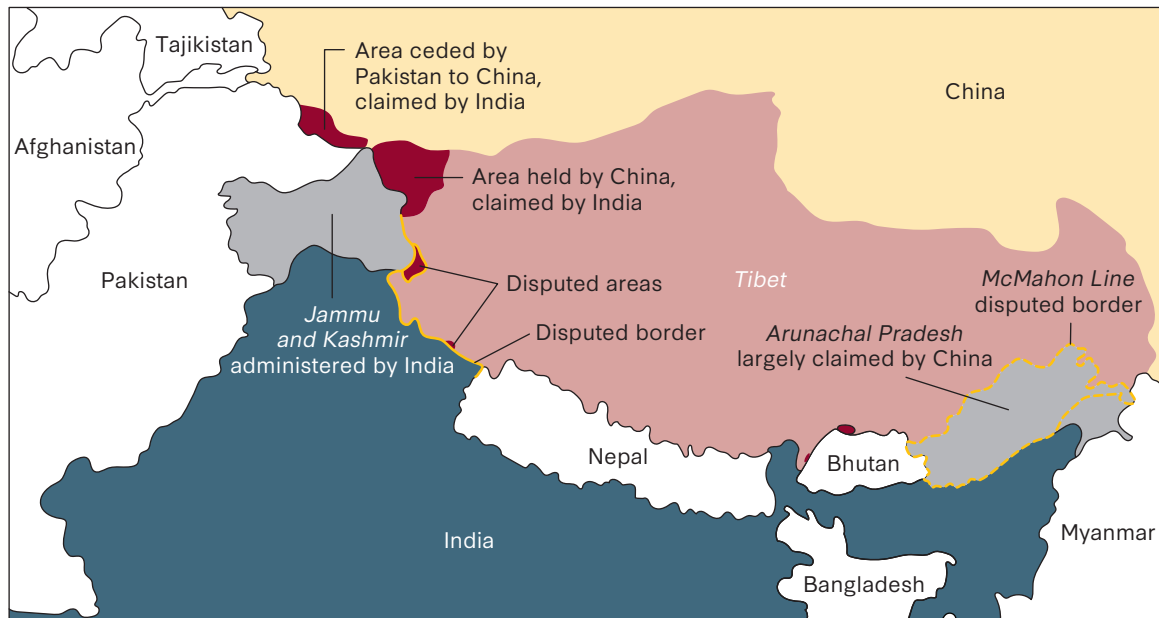
recent US administrations have worked with Indian leadership to foster a close partnership. During the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, the focus was on resetting relations following the end of the Cold War. This ultimately culminated in the US-India Nuclear Agreement of 2008, a deal that fundamentally reset relations between the two countries.

With the rise of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and its revisionist ambitions, more recent US administrations have sought to deepen the partnership with India as part of a larger Indo-Pacific strategy. America elevated India to Major Defense Partner status in 2016 and signed two important communications and intelligence cooperation agreements in 2018 and 2020. The first Trump administration also resurrected the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad), a strategic partnership among the United States, India, Japan, and Australia with the goal of promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific. The Biden administration continued and sought to deepen these initiatives. The second Trump administration has slowed or postponed several initiatives, such as delaying a leaders’ meeting of the Quad originally scheduled in 2025 and suspending the US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies.

## **INDIA’S STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY IN RELATION TO CHINA**

India’s geostrategic concerns are oriented slightly differently from US interests in Asia. The United States is principally concerned with maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. Although India also benefits from a free and open Indo-Pacific and is rapidly expanding its maritime presence, India’s principal concern with PRC aggression arises from its shared 2,167-mile border with areas claimed by China. As shown in figure 1, several disputed regions remain concentrated along the India-China border. Major border skirmishes have occurred as

**FIGURE 1** Disputed territories along the India-China border



**Source:** Hoover Institution.

recently as 2021. Although de-escalation measures have been put into place, Indian leaders continue to keep a watchful eye along the border.

## **PAKISTAN AND COUNTERTERRORISM DYNAMICS**

Apart from its border with China, India is also focused on its border with Pakistan. Since both countries became independent in 1947, India and Pakistan have engaged in four wars and multiple armed skirmishes. Additionally, India has experienced several major terrorist attacks emanating from Pakistan-based organizations. Most recently, in April 2025, twenty-six Indian tourists in Jammu and Kashmir were killed by the Resistance Front, an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba. Lashkar-e-Taiba has been designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization since 2001. In response to this attack, India initiated Operation Sindoor from May 7 to 10, 2025, which targeted terrorism-related infrastructure facilities in Pakistan. The Trump administration claimed to have brokered a ceasefire using ongoing trade negotiations as leverage. Indian officials reject the assertion that US pressure ended Operation Sindoor.

## **REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT BEYOND SOUTH ASIA**

Beyond China and Pakistan, America has sought—and generally received—support from India for strategic initiatives in South and Southeast Asia as well as Central Asia and the Middle East. India, for instance, joined the sanctions regime against Iran, was an important partner in rebuilding Afghanistan, and has worked closely with the United States in responding to recent destabilizing events in Sri Lanka and Nepal. One area of contention is India's erstwhile relationship with Russia.

## ECONOMIC TIES

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### THE BILATERAL TRADE RELATIONSHIP

US-India economic ties are strong. Every year, the United States is usually India's first- or second-largest trading partner, while India is a consistent top-ten trading partner with the US. The trade relationship has suffered as the US and India have struggled over the last twenty years to strike a trade deal, with India maintaining high trade barriers and benefiting from America's Generalized System of Preferences. In the first Trump administration, both sides were close to announcing a mini-trade deal but were unable to finalize an agreement. Optimism that a deal would be struck when Trump returned in 2025 vanished when the administration announced 25 percent tariffs, followed by another 25 percent tariff linked to India's Russian oil purchases. Indian exports to the US thus faced a 50 percent tariff, among the highest in the world. India reduced its levels of Russian oil sales and then negotiated a lower tariff of 18 percent. Following a recent Supreme Court ruling, the Trump administration announced a 10 percent tariff on all countries. Soon after, the US and India announced the framework for a new trade deal.

### SERVICES TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Apart from traditional trade in goods, the United States and India maintain robust trade in services—particularly IT-enabled services—at about \$83.4 billion (in 2024). This services trade is approximately balanced between the two countries.

While there are some minor issues for investment and capital flows, the private sectors in both America and India regularly engage in bilateral investment.

**TABLE 2** KEY BILATERAL EXPORTS (2024)

Key US Exports to India	Key Indian Exports to the United States
Oil , gas, coal and petroleum gases	Pharmaceuticals and medicines
Manufactured goods	Manufactured goods
Aerospace products and parts	IT Equipment
Basic chemicals	Apparel and textiles

**Source:** Shayerah I. Akhtar and K. Alan Kronstadt, *U.S.-India Trade Relations*, Congressional Research Service In Focus IF10384, version 21, May 8, 2025.

**TABLE 3** US-INDIA TRADE IN GOODS, 2020-25  
(IN USD BILLIONS)

Calendar Year	US Exports to India	US Imports from India	Total Trade	US Trade Balance
2020	27.1	51.3	78.8	-24.2
2021	39.8	73.3	113.1	-33.5
2022	46.8	85.5	132.3	-38.7
2023	40.3	83.6	123.9	-43.2
2024	41.5	87.3	128.9	-45.8
2025	45.6	103.8	149.4	-58.2

**Source:** US Census Bureau, "US Trade in Goods with India," for the years indicated.

## PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE RELATIONS

### THE DIASPORA AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACT

There are approximately 5.2 million people of Indian origin who live in the United States, which represents a little less than 2 percent of the US population. This cohort is the richest national-origin group in the United States and pays an estimated 6 percent of all federal income taxes. Indians are particularly well-represented in finance, healthcare, and STEM fields, making them a core demographic of America's innovation pipeline. Recent concerns over H-1B visa reform squarely focus on Indians, who receive about 70 percent of all H-1B visas. Indians are also a core demographic in US higher education, with 363,019 Indian students studying here in 2024-25 (approximately 31 percent of all international students).

### REVERSE MIGRATION AND US CITIZENS IN INDIA

Estimates place the number of American citizens living in India between 700,000 and 1.5 million, many of them children born to tech workers in the United States who migrated back to tech hubs like Bangalore and Hyderabad. This young India-based American population is rapidly growing as well, a byproduct of America's failure to achieve immigration reform.

Both countries have historically been keen to attract tourists and visitors from each other, although visa processing for Indians wanting to come to America has been a serious problem.

**TABLE 4** AVERAGE US VISA INTERVIEW WAIT TIMES (IN MONTHS), SELECT CATEGORIES

Consular Post	Visitor Visa (B1/B2)		Student Visa (F/M/J)	Work Visa (H/L/O/P/Q)
	Average	Next	Next (est.)	Next (est.)
New Delhi	5.5	8.0	2.0	2.0
Mumbai	7.5	7.5	2.0	1.5
Chennai	5.5	—	—	—
Hyderabad	6.5	7.0	2.5	3.0
Kolkata	4.5	7.0	3.5	1.0

**Source:** US Department of State, “Global Visa Wait Times,” last updated May 18, 2026.

## AREAS FOR CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

In this session of Congress, there has been little action toward promoting US-India relations. Recent and potential initiatives include the following:

- **The United States-India Defense Cooperation Act** This bill was originally proposed in 2024 by then-Senator Marco Rubio. Its main provisions include:
  - Providing equal technology status on par with other key US allies
  - Enhancing military cooperation through the rapid transfer of defense articles and fostering co-innovation
  - Formalizing US policy to support India in responding to threats against its recognized land and maritime borders
  - Expanding International Military Education and Training (IMET) cooperation
  - Conducting a report on Pakistan’s use of terror proxies against India, with potential security assistance repercussions against Pakistan if it is found to sponsor such actions
  
- **The America’s CHILDREN Act** This is a bipartisan and bicameral bill most recently introduced in 2025 by US Senators Alex Padilla, Rand Paul, Deborah Ross, and Mariannette Miller-Meeks. It would provide a pathway to citizenship for long-term residents who were brought legally to the United States as dependents through their parents’ work visas. This would affect about 250,000 “documented dreamers.”

- **Bilateral trade agreement** While the Trump administration is likely to announce a trade deal with India, congressional action would establish a more predictable and long-lasting bilateral economic regime.

## FURTHER READING

Ganguly, Šumit, ed. *Survey of India 2026*. Huntington Program on Strengthening US-India Relations, Hoover Institution, March 2026.

Ganguly, Šumit, and Dinsha Mistree, eds. *The US-India Nuclear Accord: History, Analysis, and Reflections* (Stanford University Press, 2026).

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Seru, Amit. "There's a Reason India and the U.S. Aren't Better Friends." *The Washington Post*, August 12, 2025.

Tarapore, Arzan. "The Quad Is Dead, Long Live the Quad." *Foreign Policy*, November 3, 2025.



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