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India-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress

India, home to more than one-sixth of global population, became the world's most populous country in 2023 and the fifth-largest global economy in 2025. Many factors contribute to the "great power" aspirations expressed by India's government and many of its people: the country's rich civilization and history; expanding strategic horizons; increased engagement with international partners; and a geographic setting—with more than 9,000 miles of land borders, many of them disputed—astride vital sea and energy lanes. Its status as one of the fastest growing major economies has given rise to an expanding middle class; greater defense and power projection capabilities (replete with a nuclear weapons arsenal and triad of delivery systems); and vigorous space, science, technology, and other industrial sectors.

In recognition of India's increasing ability to influence world affairs—and with a widely held assessment that a stronger and more prosperous democratic India is good for the United States—the U.S. Congress and five successive U.S. Administrations have since 2001 acted to both broaden and deepen U.S. engagement with India. The U.S. and Indian governments formally launched a "strategic partnership" in 2005, along with a framework for long-term defense cooperation that now includes large-scale joint military exercises and significant defense trade. In concert with Japan and Australia, the United States and India in 2017 reinvigorated the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue ("Quad") as a flagship initiative in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy during the first Trump Administration. The mechanism is widely viewed, at least in part, as a counter to China's growing influence, although some observers question whether the strategic interests of Quad members are sufficiently aligned for collective action. U.S.-India trade and investment has increased in recent decades, while a relatively wealthy Indian-American community has exercised newfound domestic political influence, and Indian nationals are accounting for a large proportion of foreign students on American college campuses and foreign workers in the information technology sector.

At the same time, more engagement has meant more areas of friction in the partnership, including some that attract congressional attention. India's economy, for example, has barriers to trade and investment that can deter foreign investment. Recent U.S. Administrations also have taken issue with India's cooperative engagements with Russia, a country with which India has long-standing ties. Differences over U.S. immigration law, especially in the area of nonimmigrant work visas, remain unresolved. India's intellectual property protection regime comes under regular criticism from U.S. officials and firms. Meanwhile, cooperation in the fields of defense trade, intelligence, and counterterrorism, although progressing rapidly and improved relative to that of only a decade ago, has run up against institutional and political obstacles. Moreover, past U.S. Administrations and some Members of Congress have taken notice of human rights issues in India, including those related to democratic backsliding and infringements on religious freedom.

Despite areas of discord, the U.S. Congress has remained broadly positive in its posture toward the U.S.-India strategic and commercial partnership. The second Trump Administration has acknowledged that a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region remains vital to advancing shared U.S. and Indian interests, but has also expressed differences over trade and immigration, and has maintained a contrasting political narrative around India's May 2025 conflict with Pakistan. In strategy documents, the Administration appears to have deemphasized the importance of both the Indo-Pacific region and India's role therein. Congressional oversight and legislation have affected—and may continue to affect—the course of U.S.-India relations, including in areas such as resourcing for a U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, trade and investment (including bilateral defense trade) relations, technology sharing and export controls, immigration policy, nuclear weapons proliferation, and human rights.

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Overview

India is the world's most populous country and democracy, and the fifth-largest global economy. India's growing global aspirations and increased engagement with international partners; geography astride vital sea and energy lanes; expanding defense and power projection capabilities; and vigorous space, science, and technology sectors have made it an attractive partner for U.S. policymakers. For over two decades, successive U.S. Administrations have worked with congressional support to deepen a strategic partnership with India. During the second Trump Administration, differences over trade, immigration, and political narratives around India's May 2025 conflict with Pakistan have brought significant frictions to the bilateral relationship.

India has over decades pursued a “nonalignment” foreign policy, today described as “multi-alignment” or “strategic autonomy.”¹ The Delhi government has welcomed increased multipolarity both globally and within Asia, and aspires to make India a leading global power.² Since 2009, Delhi has participated in the “BRICS” grouping—so named for early members Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—which seeks to champion the causes of the so-called Global South and foster greater multipolarity in the international system.³ Some observers call India “the world's ultimate swing state.”⁴ As put by two scholars, “Indian leaders want neither Pax Sinica nor Pax Americana, as both would be hierarchical; instead, they promote multipolarity, in which India constitutes one of the poles.”⁵ Since its 1947 independence, India has strongly favored multilateralist approaches to international relations, and has been generally receptive to United Nations-endorsed actions and averse to unilateralism or alliance politics.⁶ Still, since the early years of this century, India arguably has grown closer to the United States “than ever before,” driven in part by emergent concerns about the expanding influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China) in Asia and beyond,⁷ along with longstanding shared values of democracy, pluralism, and rule of law.⁸

¹ Per the country's foreign ministry, in 2024 “India remained steadfast in expanding its strategic autonomy, championing meaningful reforms of multilateral institutions, addressing the priorities of the Global South, and safeguarding its security within the framework of the rules-based international order.” India Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report 2024*, <https://perma.cc/VH8B-R3DV>.

² Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “IISS Fullerton Lecture by Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary in Singapore,” transcript, July 20, 2015, <https://perma.cc/75PY-NVWY>.

³ The grouping was originally comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. South Africa joined in 2010. A 2024 expansion into “BRICS Plus” included Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates. Indonesia joined in 2025. “Global South” is a political rather than geographic term that is used as a form of shorthand for what had often been called “developing countries.” Joseph Nye, Jr. “What Is the Global South?” *Project Syndicate*, November 1, 2023.

⁴ Michael Schuman, “What Limits Any U.S. Alliance with India over China,” *Atlantic*, March 1, 2023; Brahma Chellaney, “The Global Swing State,” *Open* (Gurugram), March 1, 2024.

⁵ Lai-Ha Chan and Pak Lee, “A ‘Weak(ened)’ Quad in the Indo-Pacific” in Lai-Ha Chan and Pak Lee, eds., *China-US Great-Power Rivalry: The Competitive Dynamics of Order-Building in the Indo-Pacific* (Routledge), 2024.

⁶ Arndt Michael, “India and Multilateralism: Concepts, New Trajectories and Theorizing,” in Harsh Pant, ed., *New Directions in India's Foreign Policy: Theory and Praxis*, Cambridge University Press (2019); Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Question No. 3449, Role of India on Multilateral Forum,” press release, December 19, 2025.

⁷ Per one longtime observer, “India's main strategic evolution over the past decade has been with the United States. Both Washington and New Delhi have grown closer than ever before as both look to work together to counter an increasingly worrisome China.” Thomas Lynch III, “The Global South: South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean Region,” in Thomas Lynch III, ed., *Strategic Assessment 2025: Evolving Great Power Competition at Mid-Decade* (NDU Press), 2025.

⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh,” July 18, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/rls/pr/2005/49763.htm>.

U.S.-India defense cooperation has blossomed in the 21st century, and over the past decade a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “Quad—an informal diplomatic partnership among the governments of the United States, India, Japan, and Australia—has emerged as a regional strategy forum.⁹ The first Trump Administration and Biden Administration identified India as a key partner in U.S. Indo-Pacific strategies, largely in response to China’s rise.¹⁰ Early in the first Trump Administration, the two governments established a “2+2 ministerial dialogue” bringing together respective top foreign affairs and defense officials.¹¹

President Trump and Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, leader of India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), were seen by many to share personal bonhomie dating back to Trump’s first term, and numerous observers anticipated flourishing bilateral relations under the second Trump Administration.¹² A joint statement released after a February 2025 Trump-Modi meeting announced the launch of a new umbrella initiative, the “U.S.-India COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology),” meant to “drive transformative change across key pillars of cooperation.”¹³ These six such pillars are:

- **Defense** (includes further defense sales and defense industrial cooperation; and a new bilateral Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance);
- **Trade and Investment** (includes a goal to more than double total bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, as well as conclude a Bilateral Investment Treaty);
- **Energy Security** (includes enhancing the production of hydrocarbons and initiating civilian nuclear commerce);
- **Technology and Innovation** (strategic technologies, supply chains, critical minerals, et al.);
- **Multilateral Cooperation** (includes a new bilateral Indian Ocean Strategic Venture to advance coordinated investments in economic connectivity and commerce); and
- **People to People Cooperation** (includes strengthening law enforcement cooperation, and sustaining high-level engagement between governments, industries, and academic institutions.¹⁴

The two leaders also announced initiatives for two existing “minilaterals”: the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) and the “I2U2 Group,” which includes Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). (In the 119th Congress, the Eastern Mediterranean Gateway Act, H.R. 3307, was introduced to support the role of Eastern Mediterranean countries as a strategic gateway in the IMEC). Progress in both has been hampered by Middle East conflicts.¹⁵

⁹ U.S. Department of State, “2025 Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting,” July 1, 2025, fact sheet, <https://perma.cc/KNS8-QBBW>.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*, June 1, 2019, <https://perma.cc/35BS-NKTH>; White House, *Indo-Pacific Strategy*, February 2022, <https://perma.cc/6SAC-YB89>.

¹¹ The most recent session was in 2023, although intersessional dialogs took place in 2024 and 2025. U.S. Department of State, “U.S.-India 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue,” media note, August 26, 2025.

¹² Akhilesh Pillalamarri, “India and the New Trumpian World Order,” *Diplomat*, February 14, 2025; Asfandiyar Mir, Daniel Markey, Vikram Singh, and Sameer Lalwani, “Modi’s Washington Visit Signals U.S.-India Ties Will Continue Upswing,” U.S. Institute of Peace, February 19, 2025.

¹³ White House, “U.S.-India Joint Leaders’ Statement,” February 13, 2025, <https://perma.cc/UXF9-VH2D>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See the White House’s September 9, 2023, IMEEC fact sheet, <https://perma.cc/9LZN-JQN5>, and the State Department’s undated I2U2 page, <https://www.state.gov/i2u2>.

Since early 2025, President Trump has taken actions that numerous observers say have put two decades of partnership development at risk.¹⁶ Early in the year, for example, the Trump Administration ended decades of U.S. foreign assistance to India with the formal shuttering of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).¹⁷ In April 2025, President Trump imposed new tariffs on imports from India (and most other countries). Then, following a four-day India-Pakistan military conflict in May 2025, President Trump repeatedly spoke of having played a central role in the cessation of hostilities—including by using trade incentives and tariffs as leverage—and he offered to “mediate” the Kashmir dispute (see “Pakistan and the Kashmir Issue” below). In a translated statement, the Indian government offered a different characterization and account of these events, and reiterated its longstanding opposition to third-party mediation on the disputed region of Kashmir.¹⁸

Indian officials reportedly have expressed frustration that the U.S. President has treated India and Pakistan as equals—or even favoring Pakistan, for example by breaking protocol to host Pakistan’s army chief at the White House in June 2025—while Delhi held Islamabad responsible for the terrorist attack that sparked the 2025 conflict (along with many previous anti-India terrorist attacks).¹⁹ (Islamabad also was the site chosen for U.S.-Iran negotiations in April 2026.)

In August 2025, President Trump imposed a 25% tariff on imports from India, then cited India’s purchases of Russian oil to explain a subsequent doubling of the tariff rate; India’s foreign ministry called the actions “unfair, unjustified and unreasonable.”²⁰ The moves prompted calls in India for boycotts of American goods along with domestic political criticisms of Modi, who had been quoted for years vowing to build a “self-reliant” India.²¹ A flurry of subsequent analyses in both the United States and India bemoaned the apparent undermining of the U.S.-India partnership, with some analysts saying U.S. trade policies were causing a strategic realignment in Asia by pushing India toward Russia and China.²² In the 119th Congress, a joint resolution, H.J.Res. 134, was introduced in December 2025 to terminate the national emergency declared to impose those duties.

Relations steadied to some extent in the final months of 2025, and U.S.-based pundits continued to describe India as a crucial partner, even as some also warned that relations suffered consequential and lasting damage in 2025.²³ In a February 2026 meeting, Secretary of State

¹⁶ See, for example, Evan Feigenbaum, “Donald Trump Risks Tanking Twenty-Five Years of U.S.-India Relations,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 4, 2025; “The Nobel Prize and a Testy Phone Call: How the Trump-Modi Relationship Unraveled,” *New York Times*, August 30, 2025.

¹⁷ See CRS In Focus IF10261, *U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview*, by Emily M. McCabe.

¹⁸ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “English Translation of Foreign Secretary’s Statement on the Telephone Conversation Between PM and US President,” transcript, June 18, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/4fbjrkfe>.

¹⁹ On April 22, 2025, Islamist terrorists murdered 26 people near Pahalgam, a rural tourist site in Indian-administered Kashmir. “As Trump Crows Over Ending a Conflict, India’s Leaders Feel Betrayed,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2025; Indian Ministry of Defense, “Operation Sindoor: Indian Armed Forces Carried Out Precision Strike at Terrorist Camps,” press release, May 7, 2025.

²⁰ White House, “Addressing Threats to The United States by the Government of the Russian Federation,” Executive Order, August 6, 2025, <https://perma.cc/XUC9-GK3W>; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Statement by Official Spokesperson” transcript, August 6, 2025, <https://perma.cc/FLM7-ARHS>.

²¹ “In India, Trump’s Tariffs Spark Calls to Boycott American Goods,” Reuters, August 11, 2025; “Narendra Modi Vows ‘Self-Reliant India’ in Wake of Donald Trump’s 50% Tariff,” *Financial Times* (London), August 15, 2025.

²² “As Ties with U.S. Fray, Indian Sentiment Turns Sharply Against America,” *Washington Post*, September 15, 2025; “Can the New India-China Bonhomie Reshape Trade and Hurt the US in Asia?” *Al Jazeera* (Doha), August 23, 2025.

²³ Kurt Campbell and Jake Sullivan, “The Case for a U.S. Alliance with India,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 4, 2025; Lisa Curtis and Richard Fontaine, “Mr. President, You Are Losing India,” Center for a New American Security, October 6, 2025.

Marco Rubio and his Indian counterpart “acknowledged that a prosperous Indo-Pacific region remains vital to advancing our shared interests.”²⁴ Days later, President Donald Trump announced that he and PM Modi had agreed on a long-awaited bilateral trade framework that was to include tariff reductions and other commitments, potentially obviating frictions (negotiations are ongoing; see “Select Bilateral Trade Issues,” below).²⁵ On February 28, the United States and Israel launched major military operations against Iran. Conflict has impeded the flow of vital energy supplies to India, destabilized the Persian Gulf region, and endangered millions of Indian nationals working therein. PM Modi came under domestic political criticism for not immediately and explicitly condemning the U.S.-Israeli strikes.²⁶

The Indian-American community—about five million strong and on average relatively wealthy and well-educated—is increasingly influential in American politics.²⁷ Roughly one million live in California; other states with large Indian-American populations are Texas (12% of the U.S. diaspora), New Jersey (9%), and New York (8%).²⁸ During the 2024/25 academic year, more than 360,000 Indian students attended U.S. colleges, nearly one-third of all international students that year and almost 100,000 more than China, the second-largest source of foreign students.²⁹ India’s Reserve Bank found that the United States is regularly the leading source country for foreign remittances to India, accounting for more than one-quarter of all inward remittances in India’s 2023/24 fiscal year. It also listed more than three-quarters of Indian migrants in the United States as being employed in high-earning sectors such as management, business, science, and the arts.³⁰

For more than two decades the U.S. Congress has remained broadly positive in its posture toward the U.S.-India strategic and commercial partnership.³¹ Congressional legislation and oversight have affected—and may continue to affect—the course of U.S.-India relations, including in areas such as resourcing for a U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, trade and investment (including bilateral

²⁴ U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Rubio’s Meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar,” readout, February 3, 2026.

²⁵ A subsequent “Interim Agreement” was released days later, followed by a fact sheet. The U.S. Supreme Court’s February 20 decision that sweeping U.S. tariffs under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) were unlawful injected new uncertainties into negotiations. For more information, see CRS Legal Sidebar LSB11398, *Supreme Court Rules Against Tariffs Imposed Under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)*, by Christopher T. Zirpoli. The U.S. and Indian governments postponed planned follow-on negotiations while the ruling’s implications are studied (see President Trump’s February 2, 2026, social media post at <https://tinyurl.com/yjzyxt9s>; White House, “United States-India Joint Statement,” February 6, 2026, <https://perma.cc/HVR8-3VPK>; White House, “The United States and India Announce Historic Trade Deal,” fact sheet, February 9, 2026, <https://perma.cc/DU63-P2LW>).

²⁶ “Why India Looks Especially Vulnerable as Conflict Rages in Middle East,” CNBC, March 2, 2026; “India Says Developments in Gulf Region Cause ‘Great Anxiety,’” Reuters, March 3, 2026; “US Sinking of Iranian Warship Piles Pressure on India’s Modi,” Bloomberg, March 5, 2026.

²⁷ According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s *American Community Survey 2023*, Indian-Americans were more than twice as likely to have a college degree (and more than three times as likely to have a graduate or professional degree) than the U.S. average, and had fully double the median household income (U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey,” <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>; “Illinois Primary Shows Rising Political Influence of Indian Americans,” *New York Times*, March 16, 2026).

²⁸ Pew Research Center, “Facts About Indians in the U.S.,” May 1, 2025.

²⁹ Open Doors, “Leading Places of Origin,” <https://perma.cc/3WH7-7YSH>.

³⁰ Dhirendra Gajbhiye, et al., “Changing Dynamics of India’s Remittances,” Reserve Bank of India, March 19, 2025.

³¹ At an India-specific House hearing in late 2025, the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on South and Central Asia called the U.S.-India relationship “a defining relationship of the 21st century.” The Ranking Member added, “The strategic convergence between US and India at a time of heightened international competition is enduring, but it certainly cannot be taken for granted.” “House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on South and Central Asia Holds Hearing on US-India Strategic Partnership,” CQ Congressional Transcripts, December 10, 2025.

defense trade) relations, technology sharing and export controls, immigration policy, nuclear weapons proliferation, and human rights.

U.S.-India Strategic and Security Relations

The early 21st-century launch of a U.S.-India strategic partnership was based primarily on “shared values.”³² Mutually held concerns about the implications of growing PRC power and assertiveness led to articulations of shared interests, especially after Indian and PRC forces clashed at their disputed border in 2020.³³ PRC maritime presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is steadily growing, and Beijing has secured port access with several immediate neighbors of India, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.³⁴ India’s own economic power has grown considerably over the past 20 years.³⁵ Yet the country’s myriad internal challenges may constrain its ability to influence global affairs.³⁶ An Australian think tank ranked India 4th of 27 Asian countries in its 2025 aggregate measure of relative military, economic, and diplomatic power, while also finding areas of relative weakness, including internal stability (ranked 16th), economic diplomacy (12th), multilateral power (12th), technology (11th), and resource security (9th).³⁷ Per one analyst, a former U.S. official, “For all of its achievements, India is not growing fast enough to balance China effectively.”³⁸

Trump Administration actions in 2025 provided fuel for observers in Delhi who were already skeptical of India’s increasingly warm ties with the United States. In the words of one scholar, “Long-held doubts about American fickleness and unreliability are now surfacing with a vengeance in India’s political arena. A carefully tended partnership that was once mutually beneficial is now at substantial risk.”³⁹

Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Quad

Indo-Pacific Strategy

The modern concept of an “Indo-Pacific” is a 21st-century construct, which over time has supplanted “Asia-Pacific” in U.S. foreign policy discourse. Its usage traces back to a 2007 speech in which then-Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe identified a “new broader Asia” taking shape

³² According to the George W. Bush White House in 2006, “The U.S.-India strategic partnership is rooted in shared values and is broad in nature and scope, with our two countries working together on global issues, including expanding economic freedom and democracy; ensuring plentiful sources of clean, safe, and reliable energy; protecting security; supporting innovation and technological advances; and promoting public health.” White House, “United States and India: Strategic Partnership,” fact sheet, March 2, 2006, <https://perma.cc/SUN2-JFRD>.

³³ One of the four pillars of the Pentagon’s 2026 National Defense Strategy is to “deter China in the Indo-Pacific through strength, not confrontation.” U.S. Department of Defense, *2026 National Defense Strategy*, January 2026, <https://perma.cc/98RT-27C6>.

³⁴ “China Has Acquired a Global Network of Strategically Vital Ports,” *Washington Post*, November 6, 2023.

³⁵ India’s 2005 GDP of about \$820 billion did not rank it among the world’s top 10 economies. Its 2024 GDP above \$3.9 trillion ranked it fifth globally (World Bank data).

³⁶ Per the U.S. National Intelligence Council in 2021, “India faces serious governance, societal, environmental, and defense challenges that constrain how much it can invest in the military and diplomatic capabilities needed for a more assertive global foreign policy.” U.S. NIC, *Global Trends 2040: A More Contested World*, March 2021.

³⁷ *Asia Power Index*, Lowy Institute (Sydney), <https://power.lowyinstitute.org>.

³⁸ Ashley Tellis, “Multipolar Dreams, Bipolar Realities: India’s Great Power Future,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 7, 2025.

³⁹ Sumit Ganguly, “A U.S.-India Trade Deal Can’t Restore Lost Trust,” *Foreign Policy*, February 17, 2026.

“at the confluence of the two seas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans.”⁴⁰ By 2018, the term was being used in formal U.S. strategy documents, and that year the Pentagon renamed its Hawaii-based Pacific Command as the Indo-Pacific Command.⁴¹ Section 5144 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY2026 (P.L. 119-60) authorizes the State Department to designate an Ambassador-at-Large for the Indian Ocean Region. Some analysts argue that the Indo-Pacific “severely lacks shared ideas of proximity and identity,” and conclude that the conception is unlikely to emerge as “a viable and intersubjectively shared regional framework.”⁴² By many accounts, the term’s usage has become favored as a means of highlighting India’s importance in Asia, along with the greater IOR (see **Figure 1**).⁴³

In 2019, the Pentagon issued an Indo-Pacific strategy identifying India as a prominent player in U.S. efforts to secure a “free and open Indo-Pacific.”⁴⁴ A State Department report later that year asserted that, “A strong U.S.-India partnership is vital to the U.S. Indo-Pacific vision.”⁴⁵ The Biden Administration’s 2022 strategy document promised to “support India’s continued rise and regional leadership” so as “to promote stability in South Asia.”⁴⁶

The second Trump Administration has yet to articulate a formal regional strategy. After President Trump hosted PM Modi at the White House in February 2025, a joint statement highlighted that, “The US appreciates India’s role as a developmental, humanitarian assistance and net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.”⁴⁷ Yet subsequent Administration strategy statements appeared to deemphasize both the IOR and India’s role therein. For example, the *2025 U.S. National Security Strategy* (NSS) downplayed India’s role as compared to previous iterations,⁴⁸ and the *2026 National Defense Strategy* (NDS) made no mention of India (or the Quad), suggesting to some that “the era of strategic altruism [toward India] appears to be over,” per two experts.⁴⁹ Some observers contend that the second Trump Administration’s embrace of

⁴⁰ Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “‘Confluence of the Two Seas,’ Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India,” transcript, August 22, 2007.

⁴¹ See, for example, U.S. State Department, “Strengthening U.S. Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific for a More Secure and Prosperous Future,” press release, January 8, 2018, <https://perma.cc/E4XC-ESR5>. PACCOM’s name change came in recognition of “the increasing connectivity between the Indian and Pacific oceans as America focuses West.” INDOPACOM’s area of responsibility stretches from the eastern Pacific to the middle of the Indian Ocean. U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, “History of United States Indo-Pacific Command,” undated.

⁴² Michal Kolmaš, Guangyu Qiao-Franco, and Aleš Karmazin, “Understanding Region Formation Through Proximity, Interests, and Identity: Debunking the Indo-Pacific as a Viable Regional Demarcation,” *Pacific Review*, January 2024.

⁴³ Per one Australian expert, there has been a perception that the “Indo-Pacific” construct “mitigates against China’s interests as a way to accentuate India’s role in the wider region and undercut the supposed centrality of China.” Rory Medcalf, “The Indo-Pacific as Strategic Imagination,” in Andrew Carr, ed, *Strategic Imagination: Essays in Honor of Brendan Sargeant*, Australian National University (Canberra, 2025).

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*, June 1, 2019, <https://perma.cc/ZUV3-EEZ2>.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision*, November 19, 2019, <https://perma.cc/9R2C-8GWA>.

⁴⁶ White House, *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*, February 2022, <https://perma.cc/7T87-KB8H>.

⁴⁷ White House, “U.S.-India Joint Leaders’ Statement,” February 13, 2025, <https://perma.cc/UXF9-VH2D>.

⁴⁸ The 2022 NSS reads: “[T]he United States and India will work together, bilaterally and multilaterally, to support our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.” The 2025 NSS reads: “We must continue to improve commercial (and other) relations with India to encourage New Delhi to contribute to Indo-Pacific security, including through continued quadrilateral cooperation with Australia, Japan, and the United States (‘the Quad’).” White House, *National Security Strategy*, October 2022, <https://perma.cc/72FV-PXQ6>; White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, November 2025, <https://perma.cc/MNY2-2JG5>.

⁴⁹ Aparna Pande and Vinay Kaura, “How India’s Role in US Indo-Pacific Strategy Diminished,” *National Interest*, December 18, 2025. See also James Crabtree, “Why India Should Not Walk into the China-Russia Trap,” *Foreign Policy*, August 27, 2025.

unilateralism and its stronger focus on U.S. hard power has both weakened Washington’s Asia strategy and damaged ties with an Indian government that typically has championed multilateralism and soft power, as noted above.⁵⁰

Figure I. Map of the Indian Ocean Region



Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, accessed from https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/indian_ocean.html.

Note: Map does not reflect the 2011 independence of South Sudan.

⁵⁰ Anthony Toh Han Yang, “The Blind Spots of Trump 2.0’s Indo-Pacific Strategy,” *Diplomat*, August 28, 2025.

In January 2026, the State Department issued a strategic plan for the agency through 2030 listing six main goals, among them “Peace and Stability in the Indo-Pacific Region.” The two key objectives in this realm are strengthening the Indo-Pacific economic system “to support U.S. reindustrialization and reinforce ties with allies,” and deterring aggression and establishing a “favorable military balance across the region.” The document mentions India one time, stating, “We will seek partnership with growing regional economies such as India, but on terms that advance U.S. security and economic interests and avoid repeating past mistakes.”⁵¹

These developments may raise questions for India’s national security community figures who had anticipated greater U.S. support in addressing China’s rise. A former Indian Navy officer offered that, for India, the 2026 U.S. NDS “is a timely wake-up call to persist with strategic autonomy and devote greater energy to building comprehensive national power.”⁵² As previously noted, President Trump’s newly warm ties with Pakistan’s government have further scrambled regional dynamics, in the views of some analysts, especially those in India.⁵³

India’s foreign minister has called the Indian Ocean “veritably a global lifeline” for India and offered numerous examples of India’s arguably beneficent activities there, from regional economic stabilization to humanitarian first-response to institution-building.⁵⁴ India also has substantively deepened defense and security relations with both Vietnam and the Philippines with an eye on broadening its influence in the Western Pacific.⁵⁵ More than half of India’s trade passes through the South China Sea and Malacca Straits, which connect the Indian and Pacific Oceans.⁵⁶

In 2015, PM Modi articulated his government’s vision for the IOR in the “SAGAR doctrine,” an acronym for “Security and Growth for All in the Region” (“sagar” is the Hindi word for “ocean”). He later called the IOR a “natural region,” best viewed as contiguous and approached holistically. India promotes regional security cooperation through forums such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and pursues broader cooperation via the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).⁵⁷ In 2020, India’s foreign minister said it is an “article of faith” that India seeks “An Indo-Pacific guided by norms and governed by rules, with freedom of navigation, open

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, “Agency Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2026-2030,” January 2026, <https://perma.cc/CWU3-MW57>. In a March 2026 speech to a Delhi audience, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State said, “But again, India should understand that we are not going to make the same mistakes with India that we made with China 20 years ago in terms of saying, we are going to let you develop all these markets, and then, the next thing we know, you are beating us in a lot of commercial things.” U.S. Department of State, “Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau at the Raisina Dialogue,” transcript, March 4, 2026, <https://perma.cc/WKK4-QVRJ>.

⁵² Lalit Kapur, “The US’ National Defense Strategy 2026,” Delhi Policy Group, January 28, 2026.

⁵³ See, for example, Sushant Sareen, “What Price Is Pakistan’s Field Marshal Munir Paying for Free Lunch with Trump?” (op-ed), *India Today* (Delhi), June 19, 2025.

⁵⁴ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Keynote Address by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar at Indian Ocean Conference 2025,” transcript, February 16, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/445eej44>.

⁵⁵ Indian Ministry of Defense, “The Indian Navy’s Eastern Fleet Ships Arrive at Da Nang, Vietnam,” press release, July 24, 2025, and “Indian Naval Ships Visit Manila, Philippines, Strengthening Maritime Cooperation in South East Asia,” press release, August 1, 2025; “India Boosts Southeast Asia Military Ties, Indo-Pacific Role,” *Defense News*, January 6, 2026.

⁵⁶ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Question No. 4832, India Trade Through South China Sea,” April 1, 2022.

⁵⁷ Indian Prime Minister’s Office, “Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue,” June 1, 2018, <https://perma.cc/JWF2-EB4E>. IONS is a multilateral forum established by the Indian Navy in 2008 to enhance maritime cooperation among IOR littoral states. There are 25 member states and 9 observers—the United States is not among them. IORA is a consensus-based intergovernmental organization of 23 members and 12 dialogue partners established in 1997. The United States has been an IORA Dialogue Partner since 2012 (see <https://ions.global> and <https://iora.int>).

connectivity, and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states.”⁵⁸ In 2025, Indian officials began using the term MAHASAGAR—for “Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions”—a more expansive vision that incorporates economic, environmental, and other sectors.⁵⁹

In October 2025, PM Modi proclaimed that “the Indian Navy stands as the true guardian of the Indian Ocean” to secure maritime trade routes.⁶⁰ India’s navy is often at the forefront of independent policy assessments asserting that India acts as a “net security provider” in the IOR.⁶¹ U.S. and Indian officials have similarly deemed India to be a “net security provider,” with India’s defense minister having determined India attained that status in 2022 (and, as noted above, the February 2025 U.S.-India Joint Statement having identified India as such).⁶² In 2024, the same defense minister said, “India has today emerged as the first responder and preferred security partner in the IOR.”⁶³ However, some analysts remain skeptical, contending that the Indian Navy aspires to be a net security provider for IOR “but does not yet have anywhere near the capacity it needs for the task against a surging Chinese naval presence.”⁶⁴

By some accounts, India’s navy has narrowed its aspirations to being a “preferred security partner” (as opposed to a “net security provider”) in the region, ostensibly due largely to budget constraints and capacity shortfalls.⁶⁵ India’s security concerns historically have primarily been oriented toward perceived continental threats posed by neighboring China and Pakistan. Such concerns limit the resources that Delhi devotes to bolstering its maritime capacities. Some observers expect the May 2025 clash with Pakistan to lead to further proportional reductions in Delhi’s resourcing for maritime capacity.⁶⁶ In March 2026, a U.S. Navy submarine torpedoed and sank an Iranian naval vessel about 50 miles from Sri Lanka’s southern coast, killing as many as 148 Iranian sailors. The ship had recently departed from multinational naval exercises hosted by India, and the U.S. action was widely seen as embarrassing for India: by illuminating the limits of India’s power and influence a few hundred miles off its southern coast, the incident arguably was a setback to India’s aspirations to serve as a “guardian” or “net security provider” or “preferred security partner” in the region.⁶⁷

⁵⁸ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Foreign Secretary’s Speech at Policy Exchange,” November 3, 2020, <https://perma.cc/T5HZ-RHLD>.

⁵⁹ Pooja Bhatt, “SAGAR to MAHASAGAR: India’s Maritime Security Achievements and Way Forward,” *South Asian Voices*, November 21, 2025.

⁶⁰ Indian Prime Minister’s Office, “Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi celebrates Diwali on board the INS Vikrant,” press release, October 20, 2025.

⁶¹ Arzan Tarapore, “America Needs a Real Indian Ocean Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 7, 2025; Somvir Gill and Vaishali Jain “India in the Indo-Pacific: Rise of a Net Security Provider,” *Political Discourse* 11(1), June 2025.

⁶² Indian Ministry of Defense, “India Has Emerged as a Net Security Provider in Indo-Pacific, Says Raksha Mantri at Multi-Agency HADR Exercise ‘Samanvay 2022’ in Agra,” press release, November 29, 2022.

⁶³ Indian Ministry of Defense, “Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh Inaugurates New Administrative & Training Building at Naval War College, Goa,” transcript, March 5, 2024.

⁶⁴ Thomas Lynch III, Jeffrey Mankoff, and Phillip Saunders, “Mid-Decade Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Evolving Capabilities and Tool Sets,” in Thomas Lynch III, ed., *Strategic Assessment 2025: Evolving Great Power Competition at Mid-Decade* (NDU Press), 2025.

⁶⁵ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, “From ‘Net Security Provider’ to ‘Preferred Security Partnerships’: The Rhetoric, Reality and Result of India’s Maritime Security Cooperation,” *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, September 8, 2022.

⁶⁶ Aparna Pande, “India’s Western Front Problem,” *National Interest*, May 21, 2025; Uzair Younus, “The US Is Rethinking the India-Pakistan Dynamic,” *Diplomat*, September 3, 2025.

⁶⁷ “US Sinking of Iranian Warship Piles Pressure on India’s Modi,” Bloomberg, March 5, 2026; “Why the Torpedoed Iranian Warship Is a Political Problem for India,” *New York Times*, March 5, 2026.

Some Members of Congress have introduced legislation to articulate their priorities for U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific. For example, in the 119th Congress, Section 1272 of the Senate-passed version of the NDAA for FY2026 (S. 2296) expresses the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Defense should continue efforts that strengthen U.S. defense alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region so as to increase the U.S. comparative advantage in strategic competition with China, including by broadening U.S. engagement with India, both bilaterally and through the Quad. The House-passed version (H.R. 3838), which appeared in the enacted law, included similar language on defense alliances and partnerships in the region, emphasizing Japan, the Philippines, and Australia, while making no mention of India.⁶⁸

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, is an informal diplomatic partnership among the governments of the United States, India, Japan, and Australia. The mechanism reflects a shared desire for an Indo-Pacific region “that is free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion.”⁶⁹ Its leaders have been quoted stressing that the Quad is not and does not seek to become a formal military alliance, and is not directed at China.⁷⁰ By many accounts, PRC leaders have come to view the Quad as an attempt at encirclement and constraint of China.⁷¹ First launched in 2007, the Quad was largely moribund until the first Trump Administration reinvigorated it in 2017 with a meeting of senior officials in the Philippines, and the Biden Administration initiated annual summit-level meetings in 2021. Many early initiatives focused on provision of public goods (e.g., health and infrastructure) in the region. During the second Trump Administration, the Quad has met below the summit level. An expected 2025 summit did not take place, possibly due to Trump-Modi tensions, or what one former U.S. official called Modi’s “obvious irritation with Trump and Trump’s apparent indifference to the group.”⁷²

India is the only Quad member to share a land border with China, and many analysts consider Delhi hesitant to antagonize Beijing.⁷³ India also is the only member that is not a U.S. treaty ally, potentially complicating any moves by the second Trump Administration to (further) emphasize the mechanism’s security role.⁷⁴ One senior Indian analyst criticized the Administration for “wielding tariffs and trade coercion as blunt instruments—even against allies critical to Indo-Pacific equilibrium,” an approach he argues is “actively hollowing out the Quad.”⁷⁵ Others,

⁶⁸ Also in the 119th Congress, Section 317 of the Department of State Policy Provisions Act (H.R. 5300) would require the United States to strengthen engagement with IOR countries, including governments, civil society, academia, and private sectors, and to enhance United States and allied presence and partnerships through a series of 10 specified actions. It also would require the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to develop a strategy to enhance United States, allied, and partner presence, influence, and access in the IOR. The bill was passed ordered to be reported by the House Foreign Affairs Committee on September 18, 2025.

⁶⁹ U.S. Embassy in Australia, “Quad Leaders’ Joint Statement: ‘The Spirit of the Quad,’” March 12, 2021, <https://perma.cc/7H7W-M4NJ>.

⁷⁰ “Blinken, Counterparts Say Quad Grouping Not a Military Alliance,” Bloomberg, March 3, 2023.

⁷¹ See, for example, Kevin Rudd, “Why the Quad Alarms China,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 16, 2021.

⁷² This analyst concluded in early 2026 that the Quad “now appears to be on the verge of obsolescence.” Zack Cooper, “Asia After America: How U.S. Strategy Failed—and Ceded the Advantage to China,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2026.

⁷³ See, for example, Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “India and the Quad; When a ‘Weak Link’ Is Powerful,” National Bureau of Asian Research, October 30, 2023.

⁷⁴ Aparna Pande, “India’s Evolving Role in the Quad,” Geopolitical Intelligence Services (Liechtenstein), November 29, 2024.

⁷⁵ Brahma Chellaney, “The US Built the Quad, But Now It’s Letting It Fail” (op-ed), *Hill*, December 25, 2025.

however, foresee the Quad as likely to remain the primary vehicle for senior-level U.S. engagement across the Indo-Pacific.⁷⁶

A central and longstanding debate both within Quad membership and among independent analysts is the extent to which the mechanism should orient toward public goods delivery versus a focus on traditional security.⁷⁷ Proponents of a focus on the latter insist that the Quad should “not repeat the mistake of presenting itself as unrelated to security” and thus fail to constrain Beijing’s perceived malfeasance.⁷⁸ Supporters of this idea contend that U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy has been hampered by India’s hesitance to militarize the Quad and potentially be drawn into regional U.S. military strategy.⁷⁹ Many observers describe India as preferring to foster inclusive regional stability through engagement with (an ostensibly cooperative) China.⁸⁰ Opponents of a Quad “military agenda” assert that it could alienate middle and smaller regional states, and may elicit undesirable responses from China.⁸¹ Some offer that Delhi’s interest in strengthening its own development cooperation with smaller Indo-Pacific states and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is better served by prioritizing Quad delivery of public goods.⁸² Per two U.S.-based experts, “To emerge as an enduring pillar of the regional order, the grouping must transform strategic convergence among its members into tangible initiatives that deliver visible, meaningful benefits for the Indo-Pacific.”⁸³ Another point of debate is expansion of the Quad, with South Korea and the Philippines often named as leading potential candidates to join a “Quad Plus.”⁸⁴

The joint statement issued by Quad foreign ministers one day after President Trump’s January 2025 inauguration was notably brief and emphasized “security in all domains including the maritime domain.”⁸⁵ A fact sheet released after a July 2025 Quad ministerial in Washington, DC, narrowed cooperative efforts to four key issue-areas: (1) maritime and transnational security; (2) economic prosperity and security; (3) critical and emerging technology; and (4) humanitarian

⁷⁶ Nilanthi Samaranayake, “The Future of Minilateralism and Indian Ocean Security,” Perry World House, May 19, 2025.

⁷⁷ Two prominent health initiatives launched during the Biden Administration were the 2021 Quad Vaccine Partnership, which sought to hasten the end of the COVID-19 pandemic (and failed to meet its goals), and the 2024 Quad Cancer Moonshot (to strengthen the overall cancer care ecosystem in the Indo-Pacific, beginning with cervical cancer). Other initiatives in the public goods category include the Quad Ports of the Future Partnership (to enhance sustainable port development), and the Quad Investors Network (to mobilize investments to bolster supply chain robustness and foster research collaboration). White House, “Fact Sheet: Quad Summit,” March 12, 2021; Sarosh Nagar and Sergio Imparato, “The Disappointment of the Quad Vaccine Partnership,” *Diplomat*, July 1, 2022; White House, “Fact Sheet: Quad Countries Launch Cancer Moonshot Initiative to Reduce the Burden of Cancer in the Indo-Pacific,” September 21, 2024.

⁷⁸ Justin Bassi and Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “When Its Foreign Ministers Meet This Week, Let the Quad Step Up,” Australian Strategic Policy Institute (Canberra), June 30, 2025.

⁷⁹ Leszek Buszynski, *Geopolitics and Strategy: China, the Quad and the Southeast Asian Pivot*, Palgrave Macmillan (2025).

⁸⁰ “India’s Cautious Stance Toward the Securitization of the Quad” (interview with Rohan Mukherjee), National Bureau of Asian Research, November 20, 2025.

⁸¹ Happymon Jacob, “The Quad Four and Their Four Dilemmas” (op-ed), *Hindustan Times* (Delhi), August 5, 2024; Pooja Bhatt, “The Quad in Trump 2.0: Need for a Broader View of Security,” *South Asian Voices*, March 9, 2025.

⁸² Leszek Buszynski, “India, Geopolitics, the Quad and the Indo Pacific,” in *Geopolitics and Strategy: China, the Quad and the Southeast Asian Pivot*, Palgrave Macmillan (2025); Lisa Curtis, et al., “Quad: The Next Phase,” Center for a New American Security, June 2025.

⁸³ Farwa Aamer and Emma Chanlett-Avery, “Cementing the Quad in the Indo-Pacific,” Asia Society, September 2025.

⁸⁴ Other proposed candidates have included the United Kingdom, France, Vietnam, New Zealand, and Indonesia. (See AV Chandrasekaran, “Potential Expansion of Quad: Compelling Motivations,” *Defence and Diplomacy* (Delhi), April-May 2025.)

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement by the Quad Foreign Ministers,” January 21, 2025, <https://perma.cc/64N6-SM4U>.

assistance and emergency response (thus omitting previously highlighted issue-areas such as health security, infrastructure, and “climate and clean energy”).⁸⁶ It also announced a new “flagship initiative,” the Quad Critical Minerals Initiative, “to strengthen economic security and collective resilience by collaborating on securing and diversifying critical mineral supply chains.”⁸⁷ Some U.S. commentators expressed alarm at the July statement’s deemphasis of Quad support for public goods provision, among other shifts.⁸⁸ Others welcomed a greater focus on “hard power,” contending that risk of a conventional military conflict in the Indo-Pacific requires increased defense coordination to resist PRC aggression.⁸⁹

There is some debate about how emphasis on “hard power” under the Trump Administration might affect U.S.-India relations in general, as well as Quad viability in particular. Some observers asserted in the latter half of 2025 that PM Modi appeared averse to meeting in-person with President Trump, reflecting a presumed Trump-Modi friction that they believed was interfering with Quad progress.⁹⁰ In a February 2026 meeting, however, Secretary Rubio and his Indian counterpart reaffirmed “their commitment to expanding bilateral and multilateral cooperation through the Quad.”⁹¹

Analysts also debate the extent to which the Quad’s structure is impacting its sustainability. Many pundits view the Quad’s informal and flexible processes as strengths, allowing for both rapid action and adaptability without constraining sovereignty. Others have noted that the lack of an institutional architecture has left informal minilaterals like the Quad dependent on personal relationships, without binding commitments to prevent bilateral disputes from derailing it, and vulnerable to becoming “hostage to individual caprice, a characteristic of the Trump 2.0 administration.”⁹² Observers are deliberating whether greater Quad institutionalization, such as establishing a secretariat, charter, and crisis consultation protocols, might protect the mechanism from “personality politics.”⁹³

The current Trump Administration has indicated that the Quad has a substantive role to play in managing maritime security in the region.⁹⁴ At the forefront of Quad initiatives is the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), a quasi-security-oriented initiative launched in 2022 and expanded beyond the Pacific to cover the IOR in 2024. India’s central contribution comes through the Information Fusion Center–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR),

⁸⁶ See U.S. Embassy in Vietnam, “Fact Sheet: 2024 Quad Leaders’ Summit,” September 21, 2024, <https://perma.cc/9AXG-HD4Q>.

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of State, “2025 Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting,” fact sheet, July 1, 2025, <https://perma.cc/7UQU-9Y92>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement from the Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Washington,” July 1, 2025, <https://perma.cc/T3X8-Y75N>.

⁸⁸ For example, one former Pentagon official noted that the July statement omitted past references to major conflicts in regions such as Europe and the Middle East, and did not contain previously typical references to the importance of UN Charter, democracy, and human rights. Lindsey Ford, “The Quad Joint Statement: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” ORF America, July 3, 2025.

⁸⁹ Arzan Tarapore, “The Quad Is Dead, Long Live the Quad” *Foreign Policy*, November 3, 2025. See also Lavina Lee, et al., “Mobilizing for a Free, Open, and Secure Indo-Pacific,” Hoover Institution, September 2025.

⁹⁰ Sushant Singh, “Strategic Absence” (op-ed), *Telegraph* (Kolkata), October 31, 2025.

⁹¹ U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Rubio’s Meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar,” readout, February 3, 2026.

⁹² Stephen Nagy and Saroj Kumar Rath, “The Quad Needs Institutional Armor Against Personality Politics” (op-ed), *Asia Times* (British Columbia), December 22, 2025.

⁹³ Stephen Nagy and Saroj Kumar Rath, “The Quad Needs Institutional Armor Against Personality Politics” (op-ed), *Asia Times* (British Columbia), December 22, 2025.

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State, “The United States’ Commitment to Maritime Security in the Indo-Pacific,” fact sheet, September 25, 2025, <https://perma.cc/36NT-QZRJ>.

operated by the Indian navy since 2018 “to promote collaboration for maritime safety and security.” The Fusion Center, which supports IPMDA information sharing, hosts liaison naval officers from 15 partner nations, including other Quad members.⁹⁵

Congress may consider whether to identify priorities in Quad engagement, which may include whether or not to support institutionalization and/or expansion of the Quad. Numerous U.S. congressional bills and resolutions have contained Quad-related language, including some that seek to deepen U.S. participation. For example, in the 119th Congress, H.R. 1263, the “Strengthening the Quad Act,” was passed by the full House in May 2025 and sent to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The bill would require the State Department to report to Congress a strategy for bolstering engagement and cooperation with the Quad, among other provisions. Other relevant legislation includes the Quad Economic Security Act (S. 2380), which seeks to establish an Economic Security Working Group within the Quad to secure critical supply chains, safeguard critical infrastructure, counter economic coercion, and address crises disrupting supply chains. The Quad Space Act (S. 1946 and H.R. 5175) would require the Secretary of Defense to initiate discussions, through the Quad mechanism, with other Quad partners to identify mutual areas of interest with respect to formulating best practices in space, cooperation on space situational awareness, and space industrial policy.⁹⁶

Defense and Security Relations

In October 2025, India’s defense minister—in the course of inking a third 10-year defense framework agreement with the United States—called defense “the major pillar” of bilateral ties.⁹⁷ The latest bilateral pact, meant to strengthen “interoperability across all domains, including land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace,” is described by the Pentagon as “the most ambitious and wide-ranging document yet,” reflecting “the two countries’ strategic convergence and their intention to deter conflict.”⁹⁸ U.S.-India cooperation also continues on counterterrorism and intelligence sharing, most recently with the 21st meeting of a bilateral Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism in December 2025.⁹⁹

Congress formally named India a “Major Defense Partner” in 2016, a bespoke designation meant to enhance bilateral defense and security cooperation.¹⁰⁰ Beginning in 2023, the Biden Administration’s initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) incorporated a new India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) to facilitate defense technology and industrial cooperation between the U.S. and Indian governments, businesses, and academic institutions. The initiative continues in the second Trump Administration, along with a new

⁹⁵ See the Indian Navy’s IFC-IOR website at <https://ifcior.indiannavy.gov.in>.

⁹⁶ A subsequent Senate Armed Services Committee report (S.Rept. 119-39) said the committee “believes that potential cooperation with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India, is in our national security interest given the growing space threat posed by China.”

⁹⁷ Indian Ministry of Defense, “Raksha Mantri & US Secretary of War Meet on the Margins of 12th ADMM-Plus in Kuala Lumpur,” press release, October 31, 2025, <https://perma.cc/ZT8Z-XZWX>.

⁹⁸ During the session, the two sides “reviewed a wide range of traditional and emerging threats and challenges such as terrorist recruitment, abuse of technology for terrorist purposes, and financing of terrorism,” and “discussed ways to strengthen cooperation against challenges, including through training, cybersecurity, exchange of best practices, and information sharing through continued bilateral and multilateral efforts.” U.S. Department of Defense, “Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership,” fact sheet, October 31, 2025, <https://perma.cc/337A-2G25>.

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement of the 21st Meeting of the India-USA Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism (JWG-CT) and 7th Designations Dialogue,” press release, December 6, 2025, <https://perma.cc/3L7M-PFE7>.

¹⁰⁰ See Sec. 1292 of the NDAA for FY2017 (P.L. 114-328).

“innovation bridge” (“INDUS Innovation”) modeled on the INDUS-X platform.¹⁰¹ Through this mechanism, the parties are discussing co-production and technology sharing on advanced F414 military jet engines, Stryker armored vehicles, and Javelin anti-armor missiles. Meanwhile, large-scale bilateral and multilateral joint combined exercises across all services are now routine, with an emphasis on interoperability and maritime security. Among the notable exercises are Malabar (which have involved vessels from all four Quad navies since 2020), Yudh Abhyas (army), Cope India (air force), and Tiger Triumph (tri-service).¹⁰² A leading example of Delhi’s willingness to engage multilateral security operations beyond United Nations purview is India’s participation in the U.S.-commanded, Bahrain-based Combined Maritime Forces. This multinational naval partnership has 46 members and five Joint Task Forces focused on counter-narcotics, counter-smuggling, and counter-piracy. India has been a full member since 2023.¹⁰³

Major U.S. defense sales to India began in the mid-2000s—India had received some military assistance from the United States in the mid-1960s—at a total below \$250 million. Since 2008, U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to India have been worth more than \$25 billion and are ongoing. Major transfers have included transport and maritime aircraft; transport, maritime, and attack helicopters; anti-ship missiles; and howitzers, among others. India is now the largest operator of C-17 Globemaster heavy transport and P-8I Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft outside of the United States. During 2025, the Trump Administration notified Congress of three new potential FMS deals India.¹⁰⁴ India also appears likely to purchase six additional P-8Is for about \$3 billion, adding to the 12 already in Indian service, and, in 2029, India is set to begin procurement of 31 armed MQ-9B SeaGuardian and SkyGuardian unmanned aircraft systems for as much as \$4 billion.¹⁰⁵ The United States also offers India advanced combat aircraft such the F-21 Fighting Falcon (an upgraded version of the F-16 customized for the Indian Air Force), the F/A-18 Super Hornet, and potentially the fifth-generation F-35 Lightning II.¹⁰⁶

In Singapore in May 2025, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth—who is using “Secretary of War” as a secondary title under Executive Order 14347, dated September 5, 2025—lauded ongoing work with India to increase “operational coordination and interoperability between our two militaries,” to co-produce “equipment needed to deter aggression,” and to bring U.S. and Indian industrial bases into closer coordination.¹⁰⁷ He also noted discussion on the production and fielding of state-of-the-art autonomous systems as part of the U.S.-India Autonomous Systems

¹⁰¹ INDUS Innovation seeks to “advance U.S.-India industry and academic partnerships and foster investments in space, energy, and other emerging technologies to maintain U.S. and India leadership in innovation and to meet the needs of the 21st century.” U.S. Department of Defense, “India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X),” fact sheet June 21, 2023; White House, “U.S.-India Joint Leaders’ Statement,” February 13, 2025, <https://perma.cc/UXF9-VH2D>.

¹⁰² See CRS In Focus IF12438, *India-U.S.: Major Arms Transfers and Military Exercises*, by K. Alan Kronstadt.

¹⁰³ U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, “Combined Maritime Forces,” undated webpage.

¹⁰⁴ These include for Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness, including HawkEye 360 surveillance technology (estimated cost of \$131 million); 216 Excalibur Projectiles (\$47.1 million); and a Javelin Missile System and related equipment (\$45.7 million). In November 2025, Delhi inked an agreement for the United States to provide follow-on sustainment support of the Indian Navy’s MH60R Seahawk naval helicopters worth an estimated \$946 million. See CRS In Focus IF12438, *India-U.S.: Major Arms Transfers and Military Exercises*, by K. Alan Kronstadt.

¹⁰⁵ “India Moves a Step Closer to Buying Rafale Fighter Jets and Maritime Patrol Aircraft,” Associated Press, February 12, 2026; “India and the MQ-9B Sky/Sea Guardian Deal,” Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (Delhi), June 4, 2025.

¹⁰⁶ “F-21: For India. From India,” Lockheed Martin, undated web page; “Boeing F/A-18 Super Hornet Successfully Completes Operational Demonstrations in India,” Boeing, July 20, 2022; “Not Like a Fridge We Can Buy by Just the Looks of It: Air Chief on US F-35 Jets,” *India Today* (Delhi), March 8, 2025.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, “Remarks by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth at the 2025 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore,” transcript, May 31, 2025, <https://perma.cc/J9VJ-LGQ5>.

Industry Alliance. In a July call with his Indian counterpart, Hegseth “emphasized the priority the United States places on India as its key defense partner in South Asia.”¹⁰⁸ The commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Paparo, was in India in February 2026 “to collaborate on U.S.-India shared security interests and to strengthen the nations’ close military ties,” in a visit that “underscored India’s vital role in advancing regional security.”¹⁰⁹

The meaning and scope of “interoperability” can vary among U.S. and Indian planners, with some observers contending that the 2025 defense framework agreement overemphasized convergence and downplayed meaningful areas of divergence.¹¹⁰ A 2021 report co-authored by the current Secretary of Defense for Policy, Elbridge Colby, argued that the ideal U.S. defense relationship with India would be complementary (rather than integrated or outsourced), positing India as a “regional sheriff.” It further contended that U.S. policy should aim to bolster the Indian military “as much as possible” and “Emphasize Indian autonomous activity/leadership in South Asia rather than interoperability with U.S. forces per se.”¹¹¹

Many analysts argue that India’s broad aspirations for the bilateral defense relationship have often gone unmet. A Delhi-based analyst and former army commander conveys this perspective:

The challenge is that the relationship needs to shift from seller-buyer to co-development, co-production and collaboration in consonance with the make in India initiative.... Many in India do not view the USA as a reliable partner due to the sanctions imposed on India earlier and also due to the close control it exercises on the deployment and employment of its defense equipment.¹¹²

In 2025, Indian observers expressed concern about long delays in the planned production and delivery of General Electric jet engines, raising new questions in Delhi about U.S. reliability.¹¹³

India’s armed forces are charged with defending the country’s 8,620 miles of land borders and over 4,300 miles of coastline (see **Figure 6**). They are primarily orientated toward territorial disputes with Pakistan and, over the past decade, India’s national security community increasingly is pivoting attention toward security concerns posed by China. The Indian military is the world’s second-largest in active personnel, and is listed fourth overall in Global Firepower’s *2026 Military Strength Ranking*.¹¹⁴ India operates two aircraft carriers and reportedly possesses a slowly expanding nuclear weapons arsenal of an estimated 180 warheads, along with a triad of delivery systems. In March 2026, India’s defense ministry issued a 20-year roadmap for creating an integrated, technologically advanced, self-reliant military force by emphasizing defense

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, “Readout of Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth’s Call with India’s Minister of Defense Rajnath Singh,” press release, July 1, 2025, <https://perma.cc/25CU-RQQ4>.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, “USINDOPACOM Commander Strengthens U.S.-India Defense Ties During Visit,” February 19, 2026.

¹¹⁰ CRS interviews in New Delhi, India, September 2023; Sameer Lalwani, “U.S.-India Divergence and Convergence on Defense Operationalization Concepts,” Council on Foreign Relations, June 8, 2025.

¹¹¹ Elbridge Colby and Jakub Grygiel, “Realizing the Contact and Blunt Layers in Europe and Asia,” Marathon Initiative, October 2021.

¹¹² Ravi Kapoor, “India-United States Defense Cooperation Under Trump 2.0,” NatStrat (Delhi), February 24, 2025.

¹¹³ These include F404 engines for India’s new fleet of Tejas-Mark 1A combat aircraft. Additionally, in June 2023, GE made an unprecedented offer to manufacture its advanced F414 jet engines in India (subject to congressional approval), including with major technology transfer. This planned deal received no mention in the February 2025 Joint Statement. Harsh Pant and Kartik Bommakanti, “Trump 2.0 and the New Matrix of U.S.-India Defense Ties” (op-ed), *Hindu* (Chennai), February 28, 2025.

¹¹⁴ The assessment utilizes more than 60 factors to determine a conventional military “power index” for 145 countries (see <https://www.globalfirepower.com>).

industrial indigenization and strategic reforms.¹¹⁵ Challenges are many and can include budgetary limitations, slow procurement, and technological asymmetry. Per a London-based security think tank, the capability of India's large conventional forces is

limited by inadequate logistics, shortages of ammunition, spare parts and specialist maintenance personnel. Modernization projects have seen delays and cost overruns. The government's 'Make in India' policy aims to strengthen the defense-industrial base, but progress is slow, with limited foreign direct investment in defense.¹¹⁶

Delhi's reported 2025 defense expenditures of more than \$93 billion were the world's fifth-largest, below #4 Germany's nearly \$107 billion. At 2.3% of gross domestic product (GDP), the percentage is significantly less than the 3% recommendation of the Indian Parliament's Standing Committee on Defense.¹¹⁷

Congress may wish to consider legislation addressing defense industrial integration, co-production, and technology sharing as related to India. For example, in the 119th Congress, Section 1253 of NDAA for FY2026 (P.L. 119-60) calls on the Secretary of Defense to establish a multilateral security cooperation initiative to strengthen collaboration among the defense industrial bases of the United States and allied and partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region, India potentially among them. Future cooperation on emerging defense technologies could be modeled on language found in Section 6 of the pending S. 554, which would make it U.S. policy to support and encourage further U.S.-Israel defense collaboration, including in the areas of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, robotics, quantum, and automation. Congress may also (again) consider providing waivers for India from potential sanctions Section 231 of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA, P.L. 115-44), which targets "significant transactions" with Russia's defense or intelligence sectors.¹¹⁸ Prior Congresses also have considered legislation aimed at facilitating future arms sales to India. Bills in the 118th Congress (S. 2096 and H.R. 4312), for example, would have enhanced the eligibility of India for Foreign Military Sales and exports under the Arms Export Control Act, but did not emerge from committee.

U.S.-India Trade Relations¹¹⁹

Economic Context

Among the fastest-growing major economies, India was the world's fifth-largest economy in 2025.¹²⁰ India's GDP rose to an estimated 7.6% in 2025 and is projected to moderate to 6.5% in

¹¹⁵ Indian Ministry of Defense, "Raksha Mantri Releases 'Defense Forces Vision 2047: A Roadmap for a Future-Ready Indian Military,'" press release, March 10, 2026; "India's Defense Forces Vision 2047," *Drishti* (Delhi), March 16, 2026.

¹¹⁶ *The Military Balance 2026*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London), February 2026.

¹¹⁷ GDP is in current prices; and GDP growth is the annual change in real GDP. SIPRI Military Expenditure Database; Parliamentary Research Service (Delhi), "Demand for Grants 2026-27 Analysis: Defense," undated.

¹¹⁸ The House-passed NDAA for FY2023 (H.R. 7900) included a call for the waiver of potential CAATSA sanctions on India, but the provision did not appear in the enacted version.

¹¹⁹ This section written by Shayerah I. Akhtar, Specialist in International Trade and Finance.

¹²⁰ Gross domestic product (GDP) is in current prices; and GDP growth is the annual change in real GDP. International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook: Global Economy in the Shadow of War*, April 2026. The government of India announced in 2025 that India was already the world's fourth largest economy. See, for example, Government of India, Press Information Bureau, "8.2% GDP: India's Growth Story Strengthens," November 28, 2025.

2026.¹²¹ India’s relatively limited exposure to global trade and large domestic market could help buffer against potential impacts from U.S. tariffs. The country has a relatively young, educated, and sizeable working-age population and sizeable middle class. India has made strides addressing poverty since the government enacted market-opening economic reforms in the 1990s, significantly reducing extreme poverty, yet, nearly one-quarter of the population remains impoverished based on the lower-middle-income poverty line.¹²² India also faces challenges with unemployment, including creating enough jobs for young new graduates and other entrants to the labor market. By World Bank estimates, India’s overall unemployment rate was 4.2% (2025), while its unemployment rate for educated youth was higher at 13% (2024).¹²³ Other challenges include lagging infrastructure, such as for transportation.¹²⁴

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a stated aspiration for India to attain developed nation status by 2047, the country’s 100th year of independence.¹²⁵ The government aims to boost manufacturing to create jobs; attract investment, including by positioning India as a destination for companies seeking to diversify their supply chains; and strengthen national supply chains.¹²⁶ Efforts include the Make in India program and financial-oriented Production Linked Incentives to support certain sectors (e.g., electronics and smart phones, automotive, pharmaceutical, solar modules, and semiconductors), as well as moves to boost digital and physical infrastructure.¹²⁷ Some commentators laud India’s initiatives; others question whether they are sufficient to enable India to reach its stated economic goals and argue for additional reforms to support growth.¹²⁸

Per a U.S. government assessment, India’s “continued protectionist measures restrict expansion in bilateral trade and make it more challenging for Indian producers to join global supply chains.”¹²⁹ Examples cited included India’s high tariff rates compared to other major economies, “pressure to localize manufacturing,” and “use of India-specific standards and regulations which effectively exclude foreign goods and services from the market.”¹³⁰

¹²¹ IMF, *World Economic Outlook Update: Global Economy: Steady amid Divergent Forces*, January 2026.

¹²² The share of India’s population in extreme poverty—below \$3.00/day at 2021 price purchasing parity (PPP)—declined from 27.1% in 2011 to 5.3% in 2022; the share below the lower-middle-income poverty line—below \$4.20/day at 2021 PPP—dropped from 57.7% to 23.9% during this period. See The World Bank, Poverty & Inequality Platform, *Poverty & Equity Brief: India*, October 2025.

¹²³ Based on estimates from the World Bank Group, DataBank.

¹²⁴ See, for example, U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration (ITA), “India Country Commercial Guide,” “Market Challenges” section, last published January 12, 2024.

¹²⁵ Government of India (GOI), Prime Minister’s Office, “PM Modi’s 79th I-Day Address: A Viksit Bharat 2047,” Press Information Bureau (PIB) Delhi, August 15, 2025.

¹²⁶ GOI, Ministry of Finance, “Summary of the Union Budget 2024-2025,” PIB Delhi, July 23, 2024; Chloe Cornish, “India Chases Dividends from China Trade Tensions,” *Financial Times*, December 19, 2022; and Eric Martin and Ruchi Bhatia, “India Wants Key Supply-Chain Role as Firms Shift from China,” *Bloomberg*, April 11, 2023.

¹²⁷ GOI, “PLI Scheme: Powering India’s Industrial Renaissance,” PIB, August 24, 2025.

¹²⁸ GOI, PM’s Office, “‘Make in India’ Illustrates the Collective Resolve of 140 Crore Indians: Prime Minister,” PIB Delhi, September 25, 2024; TCA Shard Raghavan, “10 Yrs of ‘Make in India’ & the Manufacturing Sector Is Back to Where It Was in 2013-14,” *ThePrint*, September 25, 2024; The World Bank, “India Country Economic Memorandum: Becoming a High-Income Economy in a Generation,” publicized February 28, 2025; and Aparna Pande, “India’s Demographic Dividend: Potential or Pitfall?,” Hudson Institute, May 21, 2025.

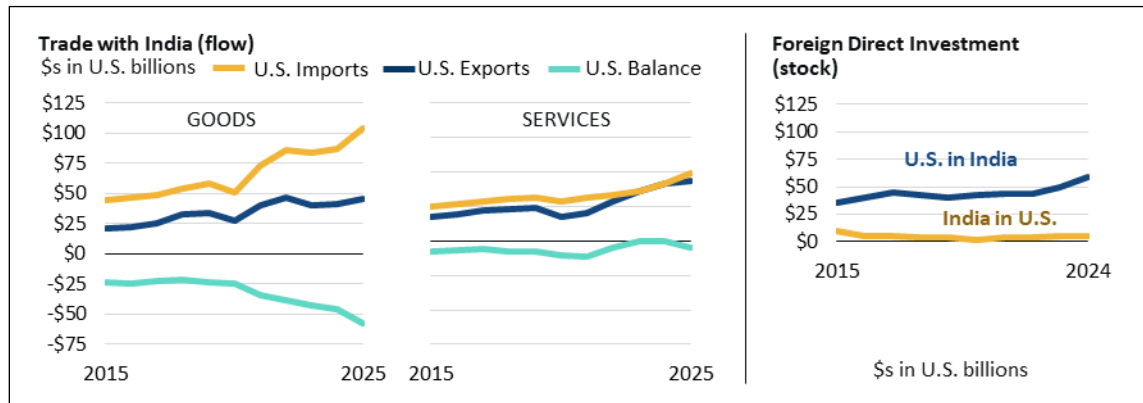
¹²⁹ U.S. Department of State, *2025 Investment Climate Statements: India*.

¹³⁰ U.S. Department of State, *2025 Investment Climate Statements: India*.

Select Bilateral Trade Issues

India is a key U.S. trading partner and growing market for U.S. businesses. During 2015-2025, U.S. goods and services trade with India more than doubled from \$109 billion to \$241 billion (see **Figure 2**). In 2025, India was the United States' 12th-largest overall goods trading partner (\$149 billion) and the source of its 9th-largest bilateral goods trade deficit (\$58 billion).¹³¹

Figure 2. U.S.-India Trade and Investment



Source: CRS, with U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) data.

Notes: Data not adjusted for inflation. Latest available country-specific foreign direct investment data, as of development of the visual for publication, are for 2024 through BEA.

U.S.-India trade relations have seen both cooperation and contention. During the Biden Administration, Washington and Delhi revived a bilateral Trade Policy Forum that had been a key form of engagement on trade and investment issues of joint interest; worked together in areas such as technology, supply chains, and critical minerals; and resolved some bilateral disputes at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The resolutions of disputes in the WTO coincided with India lifting tariffs it had imposed in response to U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs applied by the first Trump Administration under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, continued by the Biden Administration, and expanded by the second Trump Administration.¹³² During the second Trump Administration, bilateral trade relations have been in flux, with selected issues discussed below.

Tariff Measures and Bilateral Trade Negotiations. In February 2025, President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Modi reiterated aims to expand bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 and to negotiate a trade deal.¹³³ President Trump also criticized aspects of India's trade policies and took tariff actions that have affected virtually all U.S. trading partners, including India (see **text box**). Amid these tariff actions, the parties have been negotiating on tariff and other trade issues.

On February 6, 2026, the U.S. and Indian governments issued a joint statement announcing they had reached a "framework for an Interim Agreement regarding reciprocally and mutually

¹³¹ Data from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; and from U.S. Census Bureau and India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as accessed via Trade Data Monitor. Rankings are on a country basis, excluding economic blocs such as the European Union.

¹³² CRS In Focus IF13006, *Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962*, by Kyla H. Kitamura.

¹³³ The White House, "United States-India Joint Leaders' Statement," February 13, 2025; and The White House, "U.S.-India Joint Statement," September 27, 2013.

beneficial trade.”¹³⁴ The two parties do not have a comprehensive bilateral free trade agreement (FTA).¹³⁵ During the first Trump Administration, a bilateral trade deal to address some market access issues reportedly neared conclusion in 2020, but did not materialize.¹³⁶ Under the framework concluded in February 2026, the United States committed to reducing the 25% “reciprocal” tariff it had imposed on India to 18%. India committed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on all U.S. industrial goods and a “wide range of U.S. food and agricultural products” and to purchase \$500 billion of U.S. energy and other products over the next five years.¹³⁷ The framework also covered some treatment of current and potential Section 232 tariffs on India, non-tariff barriers, economic security, digital trade, and other issues. The parties committed to implement the framework “promptly” and “work towards finalizing” the Interim Agreement, “with a view to concluding” the “broader” bilateral trade agreement (BTA) negotiations first announced in February 2025.¹³⁸ Also on February 6, the President issued an executive order to remove a 25% Russia oil-related tariff on India, noting India’s “significant steps to address” the Russia oil-related emergency.¹³⁹

U.S. Tariff Actions on India in 2025

In 2025, President Trump imposed two sets of tariffs on India invoking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), the use of which has since been invalidated: (1) a 25% “reciprocal” tariff on India based on a national emergency he declared about “large and persistent annual U.S. goods trade deficits”; and (2) a separate 25% tariff, based on a national emergency declared over India’s imports of oil from Russia.¹⁴⁰ Using the national security-based Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, President Trump expanded tariffs on steel, aluminum, and derivative products and applied tariffs in automotive and other industries. Section 232 investigations pending in other industries (e.g., pharmaceuticals) also could result in tariffs.¹⁴¹

The outlook for the Interim Agreement and BTA is uncertain. On February 20, 2026, the Supreme Court decided that IEEPA does not authorize the President to impose tariffs.¹⁴² President Trump subsequently lifted the IEEPA tariffs and applied a temporary 10% tariff on many U.S. products under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, which is to expire by July 24, 2026, absent congressional or other action.¹⁴³ A press statement from India’s Ministry of Commerce and

¹³⁴ The White House, “United States-India Joint Statement,” February 6, 2026.

¹³⁵ The United States has 14 “comprehensive” FTAs with 20 countries that have reciprocal commitments by the parties to reduce and eliminate tariffs and nontariff barriers to trade and establish rules in various areas (e.g., government procurement, intellectual property, investment, labor, environment, and digital trade), which are enforceable through dispute settlement mechanisms. See <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>.

¹³⁶ USTR, *2021 Trade Policy Agenda and 2020 Annual Report*, March 2021; and Trevor Cloen and Irfan Nooruddin, “The U.S.-India Trade Deal Fell Through. What Happens Now?,” *Washington Post*, March 5, 2020.

¹³⁷ The White House, “United States-India Joint Statement,” February 6, 2026.

¹³⁸ The White House, “United States-India Joint Leaders’ Statement,” February 13, 2025.

¹³⁹ E.O. 14384 of February 6, 2026, “Modifying Duties to Address Threats to the United States by the Government of the Russian Federation,” 91 *Federal Register* 6501, February 11, 2026.

¹⁴⁰ E.O. 14257 of April 2, 2025, “Regulation Imports with a Reciprocal Tariff to Rectify Trade Practices That Contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Goods Trade Deficits,” 90 *Federal Register* 15041, April 7, 2025; and E.O. 14326 of July 31, 2025, “Further Modifying the Reciprocal Tariff Rates,” 90 *Federal Register* 37963, August 6, 2025.

¹⁴¹ CRS Report R48549, *Presidential 2025 Tariff Actions: Timeline and Status*, by Keigh E. Hammond and William F. Burkhardt.

¹⁴² CRS Legal Sidebar LSB11398, *Supreme Court Rules Against Tariffs Imposed Under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)*, by Christopher T. Zirpoli.

¹⁴³ Proclamation 11012 of February 20, 2026, “Imposing a Temporary Import Surcharge to Address Fundamental International Payments Problems,” 91 *Federal Register* 9339, February 25, 2026. For background, see CRS In Focus (continued...)

Industry stated, “We are studying all these developments for their implications.”¹⁴⁴ Delhi reportedly canceled a February visit of a delegation to the United States to discuss trade issues amid uncertainty about how the Supreme Court decision might impact the U.S. tariffs landscape.¹⁴⁵ In April 2026, an Indian delegation visited the United States that, per an Indian government press release, aimed to “finalize the details of the Interim Agreement and take forward the negotiations under the broader BTA.”¹⁴⁶

Additionally, in India, the trade deal has faced resistance domestically. For instance, trade unions and farmers staged a strike over concerns about that opening up markets under the deal would hurt domestic sectors, workers, and businesses.¹⁴⁷ Whether India seeks to renegotiate trade terms after the Supreme Court’s IEEPA ruling and amid the unfolding crisis in Iran remains to be seen.¹⁴⁸

Select Other Bilateral Trade Issues. Bilateral disagreements persist over perceived trade restrictions on both sides. In 2025, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) characterized India’s tariff rates as “the highest of any major world economy” and identified India as among trading partners with inadequate protection of intellectual property rights (IPR).¹⁴⁹ Other U.S. concerns have included India’s agricultural subsidies and “use of India-specific standards and regulations that effectively exclude foreign goods and services.”¹⁵⁰ For India, a priority has been reinstatement in the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), if Congress renews the program.¹⁵¹ Another priority for India has been the negotiation of a bilateral “totalization agreement” for Indian nationals who work in the United States; U.S. “totalization agreements” with foreign countries aim to coordinate collection of payroll taxes and payment of benefits under each country’s Society Security system for workers who divide their careers between the two countries.¹⁵²

Regional Trade Engagement. India participated in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a Biden Administration initiative that involved commitments in four pillars: trade; supply chains; clean energy, decarbonization, and infrastructure; and tax and anti-

IF13199, *Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974*, by Christopher A. Casey, Danielle M. Trachtenberg, and Christopher T. Zirpoli.

¹⁴⁴ GOI, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, “Press Statement,” February 21, 2026.

¹⁴⁵ “India Cancels Key Trade Mission to US over Trump Tariffs Chaos,” *Independent*, February 22, 2026.

¹⁴⁶ GOI, PIB Delhi, “Visit of Indian Delegation for Discussion on Bilateral Trade Agreement (BA) Between India-United States (U.S.) from 20th-23rd April 2026 at Washington, DC,” April 24, 2026; and Ambassador Sergio Gor (@USAmbIndia), X post, April 20, 2026, <https://x.com/USAmbIndia/status/2046224009864339675>.

¹⁴⁷ Rajesh Roy and Piyush Nagpal, “Indian Unions and Farmers Stage a Nationwide Strike over Interim Trade Deal with US,” AP, February 12, 2026.

¹⁴⁸ Alex Travelli, “For India, Buying Russian Oil Just Got More Complicated,” *New York Times*, February 21, 2026; and Rakesh Sharma, “Indi Refiners May Embrace Russian Oil Following Iran Crisis,” *Bloomberg*, March 2, 2026.

¹⁴⁹ See USTR, *2025 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers [2025 NTE]*, March 2025, p. 196 (referring to 2023 tariff data); and USTR, *2025 Special 301 Report*, April 2025. In 2024, the simple average most-favored-nation applied tariff rate for India was 16.2%, and 3.3% for the United States. See World Trade Organization, *World Tariff Profiles 2025*.

¹⁵⁰ USTR, *2025 NTE*, March 2025; and U.S. Department of State, *2024 Investment Climate Statements: India*.

¹⁵¹ GSP, which expired in 2020, granted duty-free treatment for certain U.S. imports from eligible developing countries. President Trump terminated India’s GSP designation in 2019 over concerns about U.S. access to India’s market. For more information, see CRS In Focus IF11232, *Generalized System of Preferences (GSP): FAQ*, by Liana Wong. See also USTR, “Joint Statement on the United States-India Trade Policy Forum,” January 12, 2024.

¹⁵² USTR, “Joint Statement on the United States-India Trade Policy Forum,” January 12, 2024. For general background, see CRS Report RL32004, *Social Security Benefits for Noncitizens*, coordinated by William R. Morton and Abigail F. Kolker.

corruption.¹⁵³ In 2022, India joined all IPEF pillars except on trade. India was the only partner to opt out of the trade pillar—questioning whether prospective commitments in areas such as environment, labor, and digital trade would benefit developing countries, and also noting that India’s digital rules were in development.¹⁵⁴ Talks on the trade pillar stalled amid differences among IPEF partners, including the United States. In 2023, USTR paused digital trade talks in IPEF, after the Biden Administration reversed its support for certain digital trade rules.¹⁵⁵ IPEF partners reached agreements, which went into effect in 2024, for all pillars except trade.¹⁵⁶ IPEF partners do not appear to have held talks on the trade pillar.

India and the United States are absent from the Indo-Pacific region’s two major trade pacts. India participated in the negotiation of, but did not join, the final Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), signed by China and 14 other countries in November 2020.¹⁵⁷ India cited concerns about RCEP’s fairness and balance, and reportedly also was wary of competition with imports from China.¹⁵⁸ In 2017, President Trump withdrew the U.S. signature on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed regional FTA among the United States and 11 Asia-Pacific countries.¹⁵⁹ The 11 remaining TPP parties (including 7 of the signatories to RCEP, but not China) signed a Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for TPP (CPTPP), which entered into force in December 2018.¹⁶⁰ Some commentators argue that should India join CPTPP, it could help India diversify its trade, gain access to more markets, and help set standards; others caution that doing so could constrict India’s domestic policy space and open India to surges of imports that could affect domestic constituencies.¹⁶¹

Legislative Activity. The 119th Congress may consider whether to support, modify, or oppose the Administration’s approach to U.S.-India trade relations and seek to shape future U.S. trade policy regarding India. With the Supreme Court’s IEEPA ruling raising questions about the outlook for the proposed deals, Congress could monitor negotiations and consider whether to codify the deals to make them more durable and/or set certain parameters for them (e.g., priorities, consultation requirements), or void them amid changed circumstances. Congress also could direct the Administration to pursue more comprehensive FTA negotiations with India to address a broader set of trade and investment issues, and/or revisit other trade agreements in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, H.R. 953 would direct the U.S. International Trade Commission to investigate the impact of existing trade agreements in the region on U.S. competitiveness, and require an independent commission to establish a trade strategy for the region.

Congress also could oversee and legislate on other aspects of U.S. trade relations with India, such as U.S. responses to India’s trade practices, the delegation of tariff and trade authorities to the

¹⁵³ See CRS In Focus IF12373, *Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)*, by Cathleen D. Cimino-Isaacs, Kyla H. Kitamura, and Mark E. Manyin.

¹⁵⁴ GOI, “Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) for Prosperity Ministerial Meet Was Inclusive and Fruitful: Shri Piyush Goyal,” press release, September 10, 2022.

¹⁵⁵ USTR, “USTR Statement on WTO E-Commerce Negotiations,” press release, October 24, 2023.

¹⁵⁶ USTR, “Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity,” <https://ustr.gov/ipef>, accessed 4/27/2026.

¹⁵⁷ CRS Insight IN11200, *The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership: Status and Recent Developments*, by Cathleen D. Cimino-Isaacs and Michael D. Sutherland.

¹⁵⁸ Rajaram Panda, “A Step Too Far: Why India Opted Out of RCEP,” *Global Asia*, December 2019.

¹⁵⁹ India was not a part of the TPP negotiations.

¹⁶⁰ CRS In Focus IF12078, *CPTPP: Overview and Issues for Congress*, by Cathleen D. Cimino-Isaacs.

¹⁶¹ See, for example, Shashank Mattoo, “Why India Is Losing Out on CPTPP,” Observer Research Foundation, January 7, 2022; Surender Singh, “Be Cautious of Joining CPTPP,” *The Hindu*, March 13, 2026; Tridivesh Singh Maini and Sarva Chakrabarti, “Is There a Realistic Possibility of India Entering the CPTPP,” *The Geopolitics*, November 6, 2025; and James Crabtree and Jayant Sinha, “How India Can Supercharge Its Development,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 4, 2026.

executive branch, and the uses of sanctions waivers related to India's importation of Russian oil. Some Members have sought to ease tariffs on India. For instance, H.J.Res. 134, which was introduced before the Supreme Court's IEEPA ruling, would terminate the national emergency declared to impose IEEPA oil-related tariffs on India.¹⁶² Other Members have sought to address specific U.S. trade concerns with India. For example, H.R. 5620 would direct the President to establish an Agricultural Trade Enforcement Task Force whose required reporting would include a plan to file a request for consultations in WTO dispute settlement on India's minimum price supports;¹⁶³ and S. 2868 would raise tariffs on U.S. shrimp imports from India, premised on findings that India's shrimp exports are "heavily subsidized and protected."¹⁶⁴ More generally, some Members have debated the delegation of tariff authorities to the executive branch. In the 119th Congress, some seek to limit the President's authority to impose tariffs (e.g., H.R. 407; H.R. 1903; S. 1272/H.R. 2665; H.J.Res. 72, which passed the House); others support executive actions to expand tariffs (e.g., H.R. 505, H.R. 735).

Emerging Technologies and Critical Minerals

The Biden Administration and Modi government launched the wide-ranging iCET in 2022 to foster cooperation in a range of high-tech fields.¹⁶⁵ Many analysts surmise that shared unease about China drives such cooperation.¹⁶⁶ The second Trump Administration's successor initiative is the "U.S.-India TRUST" (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology), a central pillar of which is a new Roadmap on Accelerating AI [Artificial Intelligence] Infrastructure.¹⁶⁷ According to the White House, the TRUST initiative

will catalyze government-to-government, academia and private sector collaboration to promote application of critical and emerging technologies in areas like defense, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum, biotechnology, energy and space, while encouraging the use of verified technology vendors and ensuring sensitive technologies are protected.¹⁶⁸

Like the iCET, the TRUST mechanism is distinctive in being overseen by the two countries' National Security Councils (NSCs). With staffing in President Trump's NSC reportedly cut by half, some experts question the U.S. capacity to implement TRUST.¹⁶⁹ In the context of rising "technonationalism" in the United States, Asia, and beyond, a key question is whether and to

¹⁶² See also U.S. Representative Deborah Ross, "Ross, Veasey, Krishnamoorthi Introduce Resolution Ending Trump's Illegal Tariffs on India," press release, December 12, 2025.

¹⁶³ Minimum price supports are guaranteed prices by the Indian government for certain agricultural products even if open-market prices fall. The bill includes findings that India's "unrestrained use of price support programs" violates WTO commitments, leading to its dominant position in global rice trade. See also U.S. Representative Rick Crawford, "Reps. Crawford, Carter, Higgins Introduce the Prioritizing Offensive Agriculture Disputes and Enforcement Act," press release, October 3, 2025.

¹⁶⁴ See also U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, "Cassidy, Hyde-Smith Introduce Legislation to Crack Down on Unfair Trade Practices, Protect Louisiana Shrimp, Catfish Industries," press release, September 19, 2025.

¹⁶⁵ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Prime Minister's Meeting with President of the United States of America," press release, May 22, 2022; White House, "The United States and India Committed to Strengthening Strategic Technology Partnership," fact sheet, January 6, 2025, <https://perma.cc/5YAW-TTGE>.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Sadanand Dhume, "India Could Help the U.S. to Tech Victory over China" (op-ed), *Wall Street Journal*, June 19, 2024.

¹⁶⁷ Rudra Chaudhuri, "What Is the India-United States TRUST Initiative?" Carnegie India (Delhi), April 22, 2025.

¹⁶⁸ White House, "U.S.-India Leaders' Joint Statement," February 13, 2025, <https://perma.cc/UXF9-VH2D>.

¹⁶⁹ "Inside the Dysfunction at Rubio's Shrunken National Security Council," *Politico*, July 2, 2025; Arun Singh, "TRUST and Tariffs," Carnegie India (Delhi), June 9, 2025.

what extent the Administration and U.S. Congress will be willing to share advanced U.S. technologies with India.¹⁷⁰ Delhi's ongoing close ties with Russia are of particular concern in the security and tech transfer realms.¹⁷¹ Observers also have expressed concerns about how the Administration's wide use of import tariffs may impact high-tech trade.¹⁷²

Some analysts argue the TRUST mechanism has "withered as rapidly as the bilateral partnership," but is key to rebuilding the broader U.S.-India partnership, contending that the alternative "is continued drift while China accelerates its dominance" in numerous critical technologies.¹⁷³ Indian officials appear eager to rapidly develop and deploy emerging tech such as AI and quantum communications.¹⁷⁴ Yet India's aspirations to become a leader in high-technology sectors face significant challenges, including a weak private industrial sector, obstacles to attracting foreign investment and talent, and concerns about supply chain resilience and security.¹⁷⁵ In late 2024, the chief of India's main governmental defense research institution reportedly said that India was 10-15 years behind most countries in traditional technologies such as aerospace engineering.¹⁷⁶

Congress may wish to consider legislation or other actions to facilitate, accelerate, or restrict greater U.S.-India technology cooperation. These could include, for example, establishing a values-based partnership similar to that proposed in the Democracy Technology Partnership Act (S. 604 in the 117th Congress), or directing the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to report to Congress areas of and barriers to technology collaboration work with India as found in Section 208 of the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (P.L. 114-329).

Artificial Intelligence

In a February 2025 joint statement, President Trump and PM Modi

committed to work with U.S. and Indian private industry to put forward a U.S.-India Roadmap on Accelerating AI Infrastructure by the end of the year, identifying constraints to financing, building, powering, and connecting large-scale U.S.-origin AI infrastructure in India with milestones and future actions.¹⁷⁷

Although a roadmap was not complete at year's end, the U.S.-India Taskforce on Artificial Intelligence, a "high-level group of leaders from the technology industry, government, and

¹⁷⁰ Evan Feigenbaum, "In Asia, Disruptive Technonationalism Returns," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 13, 2019; Konark Bhandari, "U.S.-India Tech Partnership Through the Lens of U.S. Export Controls," Carnegie India (Delhi), September 20, 2024.

¹⁷¹ For example, during its final weeks in office, the Biden Administration omitted India from a list of 18 countries that were allowed unrestricted access to advanced AI chips. Observers at the time argued that doubts about India's technology regulatory framework was the cause. More recently, two former U.S. officials reported that their interlocutors in Delhi recognize that "the United States will limit its cooperation with India on quantum technologies due to New Delhi's close security ties with Moscow." "Why Did US Exclude India from Unrestricted Access to AI Chips?" *Voice of America*, January 14, 2025; Richard Fontaine and Lisa Curtis, "CNAS Expert Delegation to India: Trip Report," Center for a New American Security, November 2025).

¹⁷² Arun Singh, "TRUST and Tariffs," Carnegie India (Delhi), June 9, 2025.

¹⁷³ Divyansh Kaushik and Lindsey Ford, "How to Rebuild the US-India Relationship Through TRUST," *National Interest*, September 22, 2025.

¹⁷⁴ "India to Bolster Development of Emerging Technologies," *Janes Defence Weekly* (London), January 7, 2026.

¹⁷⁵ Dhruva Jaishankar and Tisyaketu Sirkar, "India's Tech Strategy: An Introductory Overview," ORF America, May 1, 2024.

¹⁷⁶ "India Is 10-15 Years Behind Most Countries in Traditional Technologies, Says DRDO Chief," *Indian Express* (Delhi), September 22, 2024.

¹⁷⁷ White House, "U.S.-India Leaders' Joint Statement," February 13, 2025, <https://perma.cc/UXF9-VH2D>.

research community in the United States and India,” released an August 2025 “strategy document” vowing to “launch high-impact, scalable, proof-of-concept projects—or expand those already underway—aligned with two core goals”: accelerating AI innovation and enabling trusted AI adoption.¹⁷⁸ Some experts contend that “strategic logic” should compel the U.S. and Indian governments to take “a coordinated approach to AI applications, infrastructure, talent, and policy” so as to “align and leverage both nations’ complementary technology strengths, avoid duplication of effort, and jointly accelerate innovation across critical technology domains.”¹⁷⁹

Stanford University’s *Global AI Vibrancy Tool 2025* ranked India third globally (behind the United States and China) with strong R&D and a large talent pool, but also assessed limited infrastructure and poor “policy and governance” (ranking India 33rd of 36 in both categories). Observers say the United States and China have a four- to five-year head start in the “global race for AI supremacy,” and find that India has fallen behind, especially in lacking its own foundational language model. Despite having some of the key ingredients for success, India reportedly risks further lagging without basic structural fixes to education, research, and state policy, according to some experts.¹⁸⁰

Many analysts emphasize AI technology’s voracious demands for electricity and water, and the resulting environmental challenges.¹⁸¹ Unlike the European Union, the United States and India lack binding commitments to sustainable AI governance, leading at least one observer to recommend enhancing transparency in AI emissions reporting and developing cleaner AI solutions as key first steps for U.S.-India AI cooperation.¹⁸² Others find that, “while AI can significantly reduce system costs, improve grid stability, and accelerate renewable integration, its benefits are constrained by emerging risks,” but also contend that “complementarities between the United States and India create a foundation for global leadership at the AI-energy nexus.”¹⁸³

In the latter months of 2025, top U.S.-based tech companies Google, Microsoft, and Amazon announced new multi-billion-dollar AI-related investments in India.¹⁸⁴ In early 2026, two major

¹⁷⁸ *The U.S.-India Taskforce on Artificial Intelligence*, Observer Research Foundation (Delhi), August 2025.

¹⁷⁹ *U.S.-India AI and Emerging Technology Compact*, ORF America, February 11, 2026.

¹⁸⁰ A *Global AI Brain Race Report 2026* ranked India 6th of 100, with a score “driven by strong talent but constrained by infrastructure and governance.” (See the AI Vibrancy Tool at <https://tinyurl.com/5n8yb3eu>, and the Brain Race report at <https://tinyurl.com/2247pwzd>; “India Seeks AI Breakthrough—But Is It Falling Behind?” BBC News, February 25, 2025.)

¹⁸¹ See, for example, Jon Gorey, “Data Drain: The Land and Water Impacts of the AI Boom,” Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, October 17, 2025.

¹⁸² Urmi Tat, “Greening AI: US-India Role in Balancing Innovation and Sustainability,” ORF America, April 14, 2025.

¹⁸³ Challenges include “Rapid growth of data centers is straining electricity grids; cyber vulnerabilities are expanding as digital infrastructure scales; and both countries face institutional barriers, including fragmented regulation, uneven workforce readiness, and gaps in long-term planning.” Piyush Verma, et al., “The Nexus of Artificial Intelligence and Energy Security: Strategic Opportunities for U.S.-India Leadership,” ORF America, January 16, 2026. See also *AI and the Environment: International Standards for AI and the Environment*, International Telecommunication Union (Geneva), 2024.

¹⁸⁴ In October, California-based-Google announced that the company would invest \$15 billion over five years to set up an AI data center in India’s southern state of Andhra Pradesh, its biggest ever investment in India. In December, Washington state-based Microsoft said it would invest \$17.5 billion in India for AI and cloud infrastructure, the company’s largest-ever investment in Asia, and Washington state-based Amazon said it would invest \$35 billion across all its businesses in India by 2030 to advance AI innovation. “Google to Spend \$15 Billion on AI Data Center in Biggest India Investment,” Reuters, October 25, 2025; “Microsoft Investing \$17.5 Billion in India for AI and Cloud Infrastructure,” Associated Press, December 9, 2025; “Amazon Announces \$35 Billion Investment in India by 2030 to Advance AI Innovation, Create Jobs,” Amazon News, December 9, 2025.

Indian firms announced plans for even more massive investments.¹⁸⁵ California-based AI companies such as Anthropic and OpenAI reportedly see huge potential markets in India and have established collaborations with major Indian tech firms, yet Indian concerns about potential negative effects on the country's large and underemployed work force are said to be acute, not least in India's back office sector worth roughly \$300 billion.¹⁸⁶ Two former U.S. officials who visited India in late 2025 reported that the Indian government intends to develop an open-source foundational AI model and is funding 12 different companies to work only with Indian data sets, saying "India is focused on the safety and security of AI development but not at the cost of innovation." Like other analysts, they view large-scale investments by U.S.-based firms as a signal that U.S.-India cooperation on AI is inevitable.¹⁸⁷

As India seeks to position itself as an AI technology leader, its government devoted much attention to the AI Impact Summit it sponsored in February 2026 as a "global inflection point" aimed at "harnessing AI's potential responsibly and equitably."¹⁸⁸ It was the first-ever global AI summit to be hosted in the Global South, a grouping that India would like to take a leadership role in, including by championing a moral use of new technologies.¹⁸⁹ Participants included more than 500 global AI leaders and more than 20 heads of state and government, the presidents of France and Brazil among them.¹⁹⁰ A delegation of U.S. International Trade Administration officials looked forward "to working with trusted partners to power a new age of prosperity and security with American AI leadership"; the U.S. delegation itself was led by Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Michael Kratsios.¹⁹¹ The U.S. pursuit of AI "dominance"—as opposed to the inclusivity emphasized by Delhi—raises questions about human rights, governance, and long-term social welfare, which some analysts say are going underaddressed.¹⁹² The Trump Administration is positioning to prioritize exports of the American AI stack, which could benefit India through access to advanced hardware and software.¹⁹³ The Administration and Congress have sought to promote development of advanced semiconductors and AI technologies while also strengthening export controls to protect U.S. national security and economic interests. Congress may wish to consider whether and how technological cooperation with India contributes to technological advancements, and what vulnerabilities such cooperation may introduce.

¹⁸⁵ Reliance Industries and its telecom arm Jio intends to invest \$110 billion over the next seven years to build artificial intelligence and data infrastructure, and the Adani Group said it would invest \$100 billion for renewable energy-powered AI data centers by 2035. "Tech Majors Commit Billions of Dollars to India at AI Summit," Reuters, February 19, 2026.

¹⁸⁶ "AI Fanfare Meets Policy Pushback," Reuters, February 16, 2026; "Money Talks as India Searches for Its Place in Global A.I.," *New York Times*, February 19, 2026; "India Built the World's Back Office. A.I. Is Starting to Shrink It," *New York Times*, February 27, 2026.

¹⁸⁷ Richard Fontaine and Lisa Curtis, "CNAS Expert Delegation to India: Trip Report," Center for a New American Security, November 2025.

¹⁸⁸ See the AI Impact Summit at <https://impact.indiaai.gov.in>.

¹⁸⁹ "At A.I. Summit, India Tries to Find a Way Between the U.S. and China," *New York Times*, February 21, 2026.

¹⁹⁰ AI Impact Summit at <https://impact.indiaai.gov.in>; Indian Prime Minister's Office, "PM to Inaugurate India AI Impact Summit 2026 on 19 February," press release, February 18, 2026.

¹⁹¹ U.S. International Trade Administration, "Under Secretary Kimmitt Leads ITA Delegation to Bangalore Ahead of AI Impact Summit," press release, February 18, 2026; White House, "U.S. Promotes AI Adoption, Sovereignty, and Exports at India AI Impact Summit," press release, February 20, 2026.

¹⁹² Merve Hickok and Marc Rotenberg, "US Delegation Heads to India AI Summit Intent on 'Domination,'" *Tech Policy Press*, February 16, 2026.

¹⁹³ White House, "Promoting the Export of the American AI Technology Stack," Executive Order, July 25, 2025, and "U.S. Promotes AI Adoption, Sovereignty, and Exports at India AI Impact Summit," press release, February 20, 2026.

Pax Silica and Semiconductors

“Pax Silica” is a Trump Administration initiative launched in late 2025 “to build a secure, prosperous, and innovation driven silicon supply chain—from critical minerals and energy inputs to advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, AI infrastructure, and logistics” so as to “ensure aligned nations can develop and deploy transformative technologies at scale.”¹⁹⁴ A Congressional role could include legislating priorities and parameters for such cooperation, and deliberating funding and oversight of the accompanying \$250 million “Pax Silica Fund” announced by the State Department in March 2026.¹⁹⁵

India was not among the nine signatories or five participants at the inaugural December 2025 Pax Silica summit in Washington, DC.¹⁹⁶ At the time, India’s main opposition party blamed India’s exclusion on the deterioration of Trump-Modi ties; however, India became the 10th signatory in February 2026, with the State Department offering that “India brings to Pax Silica a deep talent pool, processing and refining capacity for critical minerals, investments in AI infrastructure, and an understanding of the importance of trusted technologies.”¹⁹⁷ While Delhi reportedly is eager to access raw materials and advanced tools via the mechanism, commentators suggest that India’s government appears hesitant to make commitments that could restrict its sovereign policymaking on AI.¹⁹⁸

The Indian government has sought to invest in the production of semi-conductors, which are necessary for the foundational technologies of AI, advanced robotics, and other technologies.¹⁹⁹ The Modi government apparently has ambitions to position India as a global semiconductor powerhouse. A highlight of this effort came in 2023 when Idaho-based Micron announced it would invest \$825 million in a new semiconductor assembly and testing facility in Gujarat, Modi’s home state.²⁰⁰ India’s supply of skilled workers could contribute to the semiconductor production process.²⁰¹ Ten semiconductor projects reportedly are underway across six Indian states, with a total investment of \$18.2 billion. However, some experts are skeptical that the country’s investment and talent pools are sufficient to make India’s chip ambitions a reality.²⁰²

Critical Minerals

During the Biden Administration (under the iCET umbrella), the United States and India discussed deepening cooperation on critical mineral supply chains—in particular regarding the 17

¹⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State, “Department of State Launches Pax Silica Fund,” press release, March 26, 2026. See also CRS Report R48642, *U.S. Export Controls and China: Advanced Semiconductors*, by Karen M. Sutter.

¹⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Department of State Launches Pax Silica Fund,” press release, March 26, 2026.

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Pax Silica Summit,” fact sheet, December 11, 2025, <https://perma.cc/QRE5-HEQ9>. See also <https://www.state.gov/pax-silica>.

¹⁹⁷ “‘Not Very Surprising’: Congress Blames Trump-Modi Ties over Reports of India Not Being Part of Pax Silica,” *Times of India* (Delhi), December 13, 2025; U.S. Department of State, “United States and India Sign Pax Silica Declaration,” media note, February 20, 2026.

¹⁹⁸ “India Weighing Pax Silica Entry Despite Sovereignty Worries,” *Economic Times* (Delhi), January 26, 2026.

¹⁹⁹ Konark Bhandari, “The Geopolitics of the Semiconductor Industry and India’s Place in It,” Carnegie India (Delhi), June 30, 2023. See also CRS Report R47558, *Semiconductors and the CHIPS Act: The Global Context*, by Karen M. Sutter, Emily G. Blevins, and Yong W. Kwon.

²⁰⁰ “Modi Wants to Make India a Chip-Making Superpower. Can He?” *New York Times*, September 13, 2023; Micron, “Micron Announces New Semiconductor Assembly and Test Facility in India,” press release, June 22, 2023.

²⁰¹ Lisa Curtis, “The Quad’s Role in Shifting to Resilient Technology Supply Chains and Energy Security,” Australian National University, June 2024.

²⁰² “India Is Betting \$18 Billion to Build a Chip Powerhouse,” *CNBC*, September 29, 2025.

rare earth elements (REEs) that are required for manufacturing key high-tech items, including those related to defense, EV motors, and energy storage, as well as pharmaceutical products and other goods. The U.S. Geological Survey counts 60 critical minerals (including REEs) that are “essential to the economic or national security of the United States.”²⁰³ The PRC enjoys a near-global monopoly on many of these.²⁰⁴ India, like many countries, is heavily reliant on China for the supply of several REEs.²⁰⁵ India reportedly holds the world’s third-largest rare earth reserves, but observers say output is hampered by complex mining regulations, limited processing capacity, and value-chain integration.²⁰⁶

India has sought to expand its international partnerships and domestic industries related to critical minerals. In 2023, the United States welcomed India as a member of the multilateral Mineral Security Partnership, established in 2022 “to accelerate the development of diverse and sustainable critical energy minerals supply chains globally through targeted financial and diplomatic support of strategic projects along the value chain.”²⁰⁷ In 2025, Delhi launched its own National Critical Minerals Mission aiming “to promote exploration of essential minerals, reduce import dependence, and ensure self-reliance in India.”²⁰⁸ A Quad foreign ministers meeting that year included the launch of a Quad Critical Minerals Initiative to strengthen collective efforts; some analysts contend that the Trump Administration uses transactional and unilateralist approaches that may complicate this initiative.²⁰⁹

In January 2026, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent hosted numerous foreign officials for a meeting on securing critical mineral supply chains; India’s Minister of Electronic and Information Technology was among those in attendance.²¹⁰ Weeks later, Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was in Washington, DC, to discuss with Secretary Rubio “formalizing bilateral cooperation on critical minerals exploration, mining, and processing.”²¹¹

²⁰³ USGS, “What Is a Critical Mineral?” at <https://perma.cc/L9PU-SDLL>. See also U.S. Department of Energy, “What Are Critical Materials and Critical Minerals?” at <https://perma.cc/MV2W-VHT2>.

²⁰⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce, “Secretary Raimondo and Minister Goyal Convene 6th U.S.-India Commercial Dialogue Meeting,” press release, October 3, 2024, <https://perma.cc/9TGK-SUCD>; U.S. House Natural Resources Committee, “The Importance and Everyday Use of Critical and Strategic Minerals,” undated press release.

²⁰⁵ These include bismuth (used in pharmaceuticals and chemicals), lithium (key for EV batteries and energy storage), and silicon (semiconductors and solar panels)—China reportedly supplies more than three-quarters of India’s imports of these minerals. Indian Ministry of Heavy Industries, “Countering China’s Curbs on Rare Earth Minerals” (statement to Parliament), July 29, 2025; “India’s Reliance on China for Critical Minerals Explained,” *Hindu* (Chennai), December 24, 2024; Atul Kumar, “China’s Export Denial Strategy Against India: A National Security Challenge,” Observer Research Foundation (Delhi), February 11, 2025.

²⁰⁶ *The Hidden Arteries of Rare Earth Elements*, Amicus (Mumbai), December 2025.

²⁰⁷ White House, “Republic of India Official State Visit to the United States,” press release, June 22, 2023, <https://perma.cc/PDD5-3JG5>; see also <https://www.state.gov/minerals-security-partnership>.

²⁰⁸ Indian Ministry of Mines, “Cabinet Approves ‘National Critical Mineral Mission’ to Build a Resilient Value Chain for Critical Mineral Resources Vital to Green Technologies,” press release, January 29, 2025.

²⁰⁹ U.S. Department of State, “2025 Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting,” fact sheet, July 1, 2025, <https://perma.cc/7UQU-9Y92>; Manish Vaid, “How America First Could Undermine the Quad’s Critical Minerals Plans,” *Lowy Institute* (Sydney) *Interpreter*, June 18, 2025.

²¹⁰ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Secretary Bessent Convenes Finance Ministerial on Securing Critical Minerals Supply Chains,” press release, January 12, 2026.

²¹¹ U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Rubio’s Meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar,” readout, February 3, 2026.

Space Issues and Cooperation

The U.S.-India Space Security Dialogue first met in 2015 after 15 years of less formalized bilateral civil space cooperation. India joined the U.S.-led Artemis Accords—a common set of nonbinding principles to enhance the governance of the civil exploration and use of outer space—in 2023, “demonstrating its commitment to sustainable and transparent space activity.” This step distanced India from a competing PRC-Russia space venture and that may help to secure India’s place in future decisionmaking on the international use of space and the Moon.²¹² Just before leaving office, the Biden Administration issued a fact sheet on the U.S.-India Strategic Technology Partnership which listed an array of space-related initiatives, as well as plans for further strengthening cooperation.²¹³

In their February 2025 meeting, President Trump and PM Modi “hailed 2025 as a pioneering year for U.S.-India civil space cooperation” and reviewed cooperative plans to continue the “sharing of expertise and professional exchanges in emerging areas, including planetary protection.”²¹⁴ A 2026 U.S.-India Space Business Forum in southern India attracted 23 executives from 14 leading American space companies, and a total of more than 200 government and industry participants from both countries, to address the priorities of the U.S.-India Commercial Space Sub-Working Group, including market access, government procurement, foreign investment reforms, and export controls.²¹⁵

As with its defense industry, India has sought greater indigenization of its space sector, and cooperation with the United States arguably has contributed to this. Delhi is making a sustained push to strengthen the country’s private space sector, having established a new Indian Space Association in 2021 to provide an apex body for developing India’s private space and satellite industries, and having fully opened the sector to foreign investment in 2024.²¹⁶ The government reportedly aspires to replicate the public-private model used by the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Texas-based SpaceX to produce and export rockets and satellites. Analysts suggest India’s space sector could account for up to 10% of the estimated \$1.8 trillion global space economy by 2035.²¹⁷ Pundits point out that India’s space programs have operated without any clear doctrine and say the space sector continues to face challenges such as bureaucratic and funding constraints (and a still-low private participation rate), limited institutional research and talent, and lack of a heavy-lift rocket.²¹⁸

²¹² U.S. Department of State, “The Republic of India Signs the Artemis Accords,” press release, June 24, 2023, <https://perma.cc/GG3X-FDZK>; “India Signs Artemis Accords, Tightening Ties with US in Space Race with China,” *Breaking Defense*, June 22, 2023; Esther Brimmer (Project Director), *Securing Space: A Plan for U.S. Action*, Council on Foreign Relations Task Force Report No. 82, February 2025.

²¹³ White House, “The United States and India Committed to Strengthening Strategic Technology Partnership,” fact sheet, January 6, 2025, <https://perma.cc/XZ4G-JVBD>.

²¹⁴ White House, “United States-India Joint Leaders’ Statement,” February 13, 2025, <https://perma.cc/UXF9-VH2D>.

²¹⁵ U.S. Mission India, “U.S.-India Space Business Forum and Trade Mission Advance Bilateral Commercial Space Partnership,” press release, February 11, 2026.

²¹⁶ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan and Sumit Ganguly, “India’s Space Program: Its Evolution and Future Trajectory,” in Saadia Pekkanen and P.J. Blount, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Space Security* (Oxford University Press), 2024; Indian Cabinet, “Cabinet Approves Amendment in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy on Space Sector,” press release, February 21, 2024, <https://perma.cc/LN2M-HFLZ>.

²¹⁷ “India Turns to Private Sector for Rocket Launches,” *Financial Times* (London), February 2, 2025; “Indian Space Sector to Account for 8-10% of \$1.8-Trillion Global Space Economy,” Press Trust India, February 3, 2026.

²¹⁸ Namrata Goswami, “Measuring the Depth of India’s Space Program,” *Diplomat*, August 23, 2024; “Moon Landing Apart, Indian Science Punches Far Below Its Weight,” *Economist* (London), January 3, 2024.

A highlight of NASA collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite that was launched into orbit in July 2025 after years of delays. A Delhi official described the Earth-tracking satellite—on a three-year mission to map virtually all of the planet’s land and ice surfaces—as a “global benchmark” in Indo-U.S. scientific collaboration. NASA reportedly called NISAR the most advanced radar system it has ever launched.²¹⁹ ISRO reports successful deployment of 434 foreign satellites since 1999, including 5 launches in 2025 alone.²²⁰ India also is increasing space-related cooperation with its two other Quad partners, Japan and Australia.²²¹ Although a Quad Space Working Group was established in 2021, the initiative has gone unmentioned in more recent Quad statements.²²²

India successfully tested an anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon in 2019, becoming the fourth country to demonstrate this capability. In 2022, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution for a nonbinding moratorium on ASAT tests; India abstained.²²³ India’s defense ministry released a first-ever Joint Military Space Doctrine in September 2025, institutionalizing a new domain for national security strategy and reportedly including plans to launch 52 dedicated military satellites by 2029.²²⁴ Some observers worry that space is being securitized and militarized in Delhi’s strategic discourse, and that the country’s space policy is moving “from a focus on space for development to the pursuit of security and prestige.”²²⁵ Others see improved PRC and Russian defense capabilities in space necessitating India’s moves toward military-centric programs.²²⁶ Congress may wish to consider legislation or other actions that would address potential benefits and risks involved in the militarization of space.²²⁷

Energy and Climate Issues

India is the world’s third-largest energy consumer after China and the United States. India relies heavily on coal—which accounts for nearly three-quarters of the country’s energy mix—and the

²¹⁹ Indian Department of Space, “NISAR to Revolutionize Earth Observation with Precision, Global Data Access,” press release, July 30, 2025; “NASA’s New Radar Mission Launched from India. Here’s What It Will Do,” *New York Times*, July 27, 2025.

²²⁰ See the ISRO page at <https://www.isro.gov.in/Mission.html>.

²²¹ As noted above, in the 119th Congress, the Quad Space Act (S. 1946 and H.R. 5175) would require the Secretary of Defense to initiate discussions, through the Quad mechanism, with other Quad partners to identify mutual areas of interest with respect to formulating best practices in space, cooperation on space situational awareness, and space industrial policy. A subsequent Senate Armed Services Committee report (S.Rept. 119-39) said the committee “believes that potential cooperation with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India, is in our national security interest given the growing space threat posed by China.”

²²² Rajeswari Rajagopalan, “Indian Space Cooperation with the US and the Quad Intensifies,” *Diplomat* (Tokyo), March 29, 2021; U.S. Office of Space Commerce, “Quad Leaders Announce Space Cooperation Working Group,” press release, September 24, 2021.

²²³ The vote was 155 in favor and 9 against (including ASAT-capable Russia and China), with India among 9 abstentions. “UN General Assembly Adopts Draft Resolution Against ASAT Tests,” *Via Satellite*, December 9, 2022.

²²⁴ Indian Ministry of Defense, “Armed Forces Shape Future Roadmap at Combined Commanders’ Conference 2025,” press release, September 17, 2025; Sachin Aggarwal, “The Final Frontier: India’s Military Space Program in 2026,” *Hind* (online), March 6, 2026.

²²⁵ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan and Dimitrios Strokos, “The Transformation of India’s Space Policy: From Space for Development to the Pursuit of Security and Prestige,” *Space Policy*, August 2024. See also Anuttama Banerji, “The Slow Militarization of India’s Space Sector,” *Diplomat*, September 23, 2023.

²²⁶ “India Accelerates Military Space Architecture Amid Rising Orbital Weaponization Risks,” *Satnews*, February 16, 2026.

²²⁷ A 2023 assessment of a hypothetical India-Pakistan crisis illuminated how even the use of commercial satellites could lead to both the escalation and geographic spread of conflict. Henry Sokolski, “Commercial Interruption: Space Wargame Exposes Risk of Dangerous Escalation,” *SpaceNews*, October 12, 2023.

carbon intensity of its power sector is well above the global average. Due to its large population and use of high-emitting fuels for electricity, India is the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO₂), despite low per capita CO₂ emissions.²²⁸ A 2026 Indian government report predicted that the country's demand for coal will more than double by 2050.²²⁹ India also imports 85-90% of its oil, nearly half of this traditionally from Persian Gulf states, leaving the country vulnerable to market shocks caused by Middle East conflict.²³⁰ As energy demand grows, India's leaders have vowed to reduce carbon emissions, with goals of generating 500 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy by 2030 (up from about 200 GW currently) and "net-zero" emissions by 2070.²³¹

The first Trump Administration announced a new U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership in 2017 to "collectively seek to enhance energy security."²³² The Biden Administration later redubbed this as the Strategic Clean Energy Partnership, which included an emphasis on renewable energy.²³³ The current Trump Administration appears to have largely curtailed cooperation on clean energy and has thus far emphasized oil, gas, and nuclear energy commerce with India.²³⁴ The statement resulting from President Trump's February 2025 meeting with PM Modi had the two leaders recommitting to a bilateral "Energy Security Partnership"; the document did not contain the words "renewable," "clean," or "climate."²³⁵

Some analysts project the Trump Administration's early 2025 move to (again) withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement and other climate-related accords is likely to slow India's transition to renewable energy sources by reducing U.S. investment in and transfers of renewable energy technologies.²³⁶ Others contend that U.S. divestment from green technologies may enable India (and China) to assume global climate leadership.²³⁷ India continues to steadily grow its renewables sector, most notably with solar power.²³⁸ Meanwhile, Indian imports of oil and natural

²²⁸ "India's 2024 Power Output Growth is Slowest Since Pandemic, Data Shows," Reuters, January 8, 2025.

²²⁹ *Scenarios Towards Viksit Bharat and Net Zero: An Overview*, NITI Aayog (Delhi), February 2026.

²³⁰ "India Most Vulnerable to Prolonged Disruptions to Mideast Oil, Analysts Say," Reuters, March 2, 2026.

²³¹ See the Indian Power Ministry's September 18, 2023, release at <https://tinyurl.com/rvy2ases>, and the Indian Environment, Forest and Climate Change's August 3, 2023, release at <https://tinyurl.com/j37sk769>.

²³² Indian Ministry of Petroleum and Gas, "India-US Strategy Energy Partnership Joint Statement," press release, April 17, 2018.

²³³ U.S. Department of Energy, "U.S.-India Joint Statement on Launching the U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership, April 22, 2021, <https://perma.cc/TC24-C8HS>.

²³⁴ Ashwini Swain, "Oil Energy, India-U.S. Relations, and the Russia Conundrum," Council on Foreign Relations, February 17, 2026.

²³⁵ White House, "U.S.-India Joint Leaders' Statement," February 13, 2025, <https://perma.cc/UXF9-VH2D>.

²³⁶ White House, "Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements," Executive Order, January 20, 2025, <https://perma.cc/S52Y-L8HT>. In the 119th Congress, H.Res. 68—"Expressing strong disapproval of the President's announcement to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement"—has garnered 162 cosponsors.

²³⁷ "US Withdrawal from Paris Accord May Slow India's Transition to Green Energy," *Moneycontrol* (Mumbai), January 24, 2025.

²³⁸ Indian Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, "Solar Overview," <https://mnre.gov.in/en/solar-overview>. In the past decade, India claims to have seen a 4,000% increase in its installed capacity of solar energy. Delhi is the headquarters of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), a multilateral initiative launched by India and France with a goal of "uniting efforts to combat climate change by implementing solar energy solutions" and targeting \$1 trillion in related investments by 2030. The alliance has more than 100 signatories and 90 full members. The United States joined as the 101st member in late 2021, then withdrew in early 2025 ("Trump Pulls Out of Global Climate Treaty," *New York Times*, January 7, 2026; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "English Translation of Prime Minister's Statement During the BRICS Session on Environment, COP-30, and Global Health," transcript, July 7, 2025; ISA at <https://isa.int>).

gas from the United States surged in 2025.²³⁹ In addition, after being moribund for two decades, U.S. plans to launch civil nuclear energy commerce with India may yet come to fruition following late 2025 changes to Indian law that open this sector to private and foreign investment.²⁴⁰ Provisions in the International Nuclear Energy Act of 2025 (S. 1801 and H.R. 3626) call for the Secretary of State to establish a joint consultative mechanism with the Delhi government to assess the implementation of the U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation agreement made in 2008. This language subsequently appeared in the enacted version of the NDAA for FY2026 (P.L. 119-60).

Scientific assessments find India acutely vulnerable to and poorly prepared for the effects of climate change. For example, Yale University’s 2024 *Environmental Performance Index*, which ranks countries on climate change performance, environmental health, and ecosystem vitality, ranked India 176th of 180 countries (the United States ranks 35th). Air pollution is endemic: in 2025, India was found to be the world’s sixth-most-afflicted country and home to three of the four most polluted cities (Delhi ranks fourth)²⁴¹ As of April 2026, the independent Climate Action Tracker gives India an overall rating of “highly insufficient” (the United States is rated “insufficient”), “indicating that India’s climate policies and commitments are not consistent with the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C temperature limit.”²⁴² Urbanization, heat waves, flooding, and food and water insecurity are among the urgent and related challenges.²⁴³ Pending legislation in the 119th Congress includes the No Climate Treaties Act of 2026 (S. 3713), which would require the advice and consent of the Senate for entry or reentry into any international climate agreement.

Immigration²⁴⁴

H-1B Visa Program

India closely watches U.S. immigration policy, particularly for the H-1B nonimmigrant visa program (for temporary workers in specialty occupations). Indians have accounted for the highest number of annual H-1B visa issuances for decades.²⁴⁵ Reforming the H-1B program has been of

²³⁹ “India Seeks to Import More US Oil and Gas Under Pressure from Trump to Stop Russian Oil Purchases,” Associated Press, October 13, 2025; “India’s Russian Oil Imports at 6-Month High in November 2025, U.S. Imports Jump Too,” *Hindu* (Chennai), January 4, 2026.

²⁴⁰ In December 2025, the Delhi government enacted a new law—the “SHANTI Act”—effectively replacing the country’s Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and overhauling its Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act of 2010 with an aim of opening India’s nuclear sector to private and foreign investment. U.S. observers welcomed the changes as enabling new levels of bilateral nuclear energy cooperation. “USISPF Welcomes SHANTI Act, Calls It Turning Point for India’s Energy Sector,” Asian News International (Delhi), December 23, 2025.

²⁴¹ Yale Index at <https://perma.cc/A35X-R849>; 2025 *IQAir World Air Quality Report* at <https://www.iqair.com/us/world-most-polluted-countries>.

²⁴² The Climate Action Tracker is an independent scientific project that tracks government climate action and measures it against globally agreed Paris Agreement aims (<https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/india>).

²⁴³ The 2025 *Global Hunger Index* ranks India 102nd of 123 countries, calling levels of hunger there “serious” (<https://tinyurl.com/4h5b3pav>). See also “Indian Cities Are Utterly Unprepared for What Is About to Hit Them,” *Economist* (London), August 21, 2024; “Rising Threat at the Water’s Edge,” *Washington Post*, April 24, 2024.

²⁴⁴ This section was written by Jill Wilson, Analyst in Immigration Policy, and William Kandel, Specialist in Immigration Policy.

²⁴⁵ For more information, see CRS In Focus IF12912, *The H-1B Visa for Specialty Occupation Workers*, by Jill H. Wilson. From FY1997 through FY2024, more H-1B visas were issued every year to Indians than to any other nationality. In FY2024, 69% of H-1B visa issuances were for Indian nationals. CRS analysis of State Department data, “Nonimmigrant Visa Issuances by Visa Class and by Nationality, FY1997-2024 NIV Detail Table,” available at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/nonimmigrant-visa-statistics.html>.

interest to the U.S. Congress for many years. Detractors assert hiring through the program displaces U.S. workers and proponents maintain U.S. employer demand for H-1B nonimmigrant workers reflects a lack of qualified U.S. workers to fill open positions, and is thus a matter of concern for U.S. competitiveness.²⁴⁶ A September 2025 presidential proclamation adding a \$100,000 fee to new petitions for certain H-1B workers received much attention in the Indian press.²⁴⁷ Several House Members sent a letter to President Trump expressing concern about the impact that the new fee would have on the U.S.-India relationship, among other issues.²⁴⁸

In December 2025, the State Department made H-1B visa applicants and their dependents subject to an “online presence review,” also known as “enhanced vetting.”²⁴⁹ U.S. consulates in India have reportedly postponed H-1B visa interview appointments by several months, citing operational constraints in implementing the new policy.²⁵⁰

Permanent Employment-Based Immigration

India is consistently the top origin country for permanent employment-based immigrants to the United States.²⁵¹ U.S. immigration law prevents any one country from receiving more than 7% of numerically limited immigrant visas in a given year, resulting in long waits for nationals of India to receive lawful permanent resident (LPR) status, either by adjusting to LPR status from within the United States or by receiving an immigrant visa through consular processing abroad.²⁵² The Indian government has expressed concern about Indian nationals’ long waits (which can sometimes last decades, often while working in the United States in H-1B status).²⁵³ These waits, in turn, can result in the children of H-1B and other temporary workers aging out of their lawful

²⁴⁶ For more information, see CRS Report R47159, *Temporary Professional Foreign Workers: Background, Trends, and Policy Issues*, by Jill H. Wilson.

²⁴⁷ Presidential Proclamation 10973, “Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers,” September 19, 2025. See “Trump Signs Proclamation to Raise H-1B Visa Fee to \$100,000 per Year,” *Hindustan Times*, September 20, 2025; and “National Security’: Why Trump Imposed \$100,000 Fee per Year on H-1B Visas; Likely Major Blow to Tech,” *Times of India*, September 20, 2025. For more information on the proclamation, see CRS Insight IN12617, *New H-1B Fee and Other Recent H-1B Developments*, by Jill H. Wilson and Elizabeth Weber Handwerker.

²⁴⁸ Letter from Rep. Jimmy Panetta, Member of Congress; Rep. Ami Bera, Member of Congress; and Rep. Salud Carbajal, Member of Congress, et al. to President Donald J. Trump, October 30, 2025.

²⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State, “Announcement of Expanded Screening and Vetting for H-1B and Dependent H-4 Visa Applicants,” press release, December 3, 2025. Applicants for F, M, and J visas (for foreign students and exchange visitors) became subject to enhanced vetting in June 2025. See also media reports on H-1B enhanced vetting: Humeyra Pamuk, “Exclusive: Trump Administration Orders Enhanced Vetting for Applicants of H-1B Visa,” *Reuters*, December 4, 2025; and Shannon Bond, “State Department to Deny Visas to Fact Checkers and Others, Citing ‘Censorship,’” *NPR*, December 4, 2025.

²⁵⁰ Billal Rahman, “H-1B Visa Update: Appointments Canceled Amid ‘Operational Constraints,’” *Newsweek*, December 9, 2025.

²⁵¹ For more information, see CRS Report R47164, *U.S. Employment-Based Immigration Policy*, coordinated by William A. Kandel.

²⁵² For more information, see CRS Report R45447, *Permanent Employment-Based Immigration and the Per-country Ceiling*, by William A. Kandel, and CRS Report R47164, *U.S. Employment-Based Immigration Policy*, coordinated by William A. Kandel.

²⁵³ See, for example, Yash Nitish Bajaj, “USCIS Visa Bulletin June 2025: No Good News for Indian Green Card Applicants, Delays to Continue,” *Hindustan Times*, May 14, 2025; Ishani Duttagupta, “Immigration Policy Changes Being Considered by Trump Administration May Hit Indians on Green Card Queues Hard,” *Times of India*, February 9, 2025; and Andrew Kreighbaum, “Indian Immigrants Lose Another Challenge to Green Card Policies,” *Bloomberg Law*, January 23, 2025. This issue was also raised by Indian officials in meetings with CRS in New Delhi, September 2023.

immigration status.²⁵⁴ Some Members of Congress have repeatedly proposed raising or eliminating the 7% per-country ceiling.²⁵⁵

Visa Interview Wait Times

Indian officials also have expressed concerns over long wait times for Indians applying for temporary worker, tourist, and student visas.²⁵⁶ The U.S. Mission in India made strides in recent years to address these backlogs, processing a record number of visas in FY2023.²⁵⁷ In early 2024, the State Department piloted a two-month program to allow temporary workers in H-1B status to renew their visas without having to leave the United States, thus cutting down on demand at U.S. consulates in India.²⁵⁸ A bipartisan group of Members of Congress sent a letter to Secretary of State Rubio in May 2025 requesting that the domestic visa renewal policy be continued and expanded to other classes of temporary worker visas.²⁵⁹

Unauthorized Immigration and Removals

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) estimates that there were approximately 220,000 Indian nationals in the United States without lawful status in 2022.²⁶⁰ From FY2022 through FY2024, the number of Indian nationals apprehended crossing the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada borders between official U.S. ports of entry increased substantially.²⁶¹ Total apprehensions fell considerably in FY2025, reflecting overall lower apprehension levels at the Southwest border. Many of these individuals applied for asylum in the United States.²⁶² Data published by the

²⁵⁴ For more information, see CRS Insight IN11844, *Legal Dreamers*, by Jill H. Wilson and William A. Kandel.

²⁵⁵ For more information, see CRS Report R47164, *U.S. Employment-Based Immigration Policy*, coordinated by William A. Kandel.

²⁵⁶ See, for example, Karishma Mehrotra, “India Tries to Give Trump ‘Quick Wins.’ What Does Modi Want in Return?” *Washington Post*, January 28, 2025.

²⁵⁷ U.S. Embassy and Consulates in India, “U.S. Sets Visa Records in India in 2023 Through Staffing Increases, Innovations, and Increased Efficiency,” press release, January 29, 2024.

²⁵⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Pilot Program to Resume Renewal of H-1B Nonimmigrant Visas in the United States for Certain Qualified Noncitizens,” 88 *Federal Register* 88467, December 21, 2023.

²⁵⁹ Letter from Rep. Suhas Subramanyam, Rep. Rich McCormick, Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, et al. to Secretary Marco Rubio, May 7, 2025.

²⁶⁰ Bryan Baker and Robert Warren, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2018–January 2022*, DHS Office of Homeland Security Statistics, April 2024. Nongovernmental research groups have produced varying estimates of this population for the same year, ranging from 375,000 to 725,000. For more information, see Ariel G. Soto, Julia Gelatt, and Jennifer Van Hook, *Diverse Flows Drive Increase in U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population*, Migration Policy Institute, July 2024; Center for Migration Studies, *Estimates of Undocumented and Eligible-to-Naturalize Populations by State*, web tool, available at <http://data.cmsny.org/>; and Jeffrey S. Passel and Jens Manuel Krogstad, *What We Know About Unauthorized Immigrants Living in the U.S.*, Pew Research Center, July 22, 2024.

²⁶¹ From FY2022 through FY2024, U.S. Border Patrol apprehensions of Indian nationals at the U.S.-Mexico border averaged about 28,495 annually. A decade earlier, for example, apprehensions of Indians from FY2012 through FY2014 averaged 956 annually. Comparable figures for USBP apprehensions of Indian nationals at the U.S.-Canada border over the same two periods were 5,355 (FY2022-FY2024) and 119 (FY2012-FY2014), respectively. For FY2022-FY2024 figures, see U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “Nationwide Encounters,” <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>, last modified March 5, 2025. For FY2012-FY2014 figures, see U.S. Customs and Border Protection, *U.S. Border Patrol Nationwide Apprehensions by Citizenship and Sector, (FY2007-FY2020)*, August 10, 2021, <https://perma.cc/8BHM-7XBX>.

²⁶² For more information, see CRS Report R45539, *Immigration: U.S. Asylum Policy*, by Andorra Bruno.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that asylum applications filed by Indian nationals in the United States increased between 2013 and 2023.²⁶³

As of August 2025, there were nearly 101,000 Indian nationals in the United States in removal proceedings.²⁶⁴ DHS has labeled India as “uncooperative” or “recalcitrant” with regard to accepting its nationals when the United States attempts to remove them.²⁶⁵ The Trump Administration has threatened to implement sanctions on such countries as part of its focus on immigration enforcement.²⁶⁶ In February 2025, the United States deported 104 Indians in restraints aboard a military plane, prompting protests by Indian Members of Parliament.²⁶⁷

Indian Students in the United States

India recently surpassed China as the source country for the largest number of foreign students studying in the United States.²⁶⁸ The economic contribution of Indian students to the United States was noted during a meeting between Modi and President Trump in February 2025; the leaders stated an intent to strengthen collaboration between U.S. and Indian institutions of higher education.²⁶⁹ Since the Trump Administration has increased its vetting of student visa applicants and delayed visa processing, among other restrictive actions, the number of foreign students, including Indian students, coming to the United States has declined.²⁷⁰

Democracy, Human Rights, and Transnational Repression²⁷¹

U.S. government reports have documented ongoing human rights violations in India—many in the realm of religious freedom—and some Members of Congress have expressed concerns.²⁷² By

²⁶³ From 2013 to 2017, asylum applications by Indian nationals averaged 4,455 annually. From 2018 to 2021, the annual average increased to 7,633. Indian nationals filed 21,415 asylum applications in 2022 and 51,353 in FY2023. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *International Migration Outlook 2024*, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 312, <https://doi.org/10.1787/50b0353e-en>.

²⁶⁴ CRS calculations using the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) at Syracuse University, “Immigration Court Backlog,” data tool, August 2025, available at <https://perma.cc/F5CT-QAPU>.

²⁶⁵ CRS In Focus IF11025, *Immigration: “Recalcitrant” Countries and the Use of Visa Sanctions to Encourage Cooperation with Alien Removals*, by Jill H. Wilson.

²⁶⁶ Executive Order 14159, “Protecting the American People Against Invasion,” 90 *Federal Register* 8443-8448, January 20, 2025.

²⁶⁷ Arshad R. Zargar, “Fury in India over U.S. Allegedly Flying Deportees Halfway Around the World in Handcuffs and Leg Chains,” *CBS News*, February 6, 2025. Restraint requirements for persons being deported by plane are outlined in Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *ICE Air Operations Handbook*, Edition 1.0 (2015), p. 17.

²⁶⁸ In the 2024/2025 school year, there were approximately 363,000 Indian students in the United States, comprising nearly 31% of the total foreign student population. Institute of International Education, 2024. “Top Place of Origin of International Students, 2001/2002-2024/2025,” *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.opendoorsdata.org>.

²⁶⁹ U.S. Mission India, “United States–India Joint Leaders Statement,” press release, February 13, 2025, <https://in.usembassy.gov/united-states-india-joint-leaders-statement>.

²⁷⁰ After a reported peak of close to 100,000 student arrivals from India in 2023, arrivals fell 44% by August 2025. Aatish Bhatia and Amy Fan, “Nearly 20 Percent Fewer International Students Traveled to the U.S. in August,” *New York Times*, October 6, 2025. See also Shashank Mattoo, “‘US Not an Option for Us Anymore’: Indian Students Turn Away from America,” *Hindustan Times*, October 7, 2025.

²⁷¹ See also CRS In Focus IF12198, *India: Human Rights Assessments*, by K. Alan Kronstadt.

²⁷² See CRS Report R45303, *India: Religious Freedom Issues*, by K. Alan Kronstadt. See also a June 20, 2023, (continued...)

most accounts, the scale of such abuses has increased significantly under PM Modi and his Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, in power since 2014. Signs of democratic backsliding and creeping autocracy over the past decade have raised alarms among some watchdog groups, although opposition parties performed well in 2024 national elections.²⁷³ The State Department’s *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* contends that India’s government “took minimal credible steps or action to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.”²⁷⁴

The most recent annual report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) states that, in 2025, “religious freedom conditions in India continued to deteriorate as the government introduced and enforced new legislation targeting religious minority communities and their houses of worship.”²⁷⁵ USCIRF has previously found “systematic religious persecution” in India through government policies that “closely align with Hindutva [Hindu nationalist] ideology, discriminating and disenfranchising members of India’s religious minority communities.”²⁷⁶ The Commission has since 2020 recommended annually that the State Department designate India as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA, P.L. 105-292) “for engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations.” An independent 2026 assessment found that the number of “hate speech events targeting religious minorities” in India (nearly always members of India’s large Muslim minority community) doubled in 2025 as compared to 2023 to more than 1,300.²⁷⁷

Press freedoms, internet censorship, and restrictions on nongovernmental organization operations and social media companies are further areas of concern.²⁷⁸ The status of India’s women is among the lowest worldwide, according to studies by the World Economic Forum.²⁷⁹ According to the State Department, India’s human trafficking protection efforts in 2024 “remained inadequate.”

congressional letter to President Biden letter signed by 75 Members, 18 Senators among them, at <https://perma.cc/P77K-4MVR>.

²⁷³ For example, since 2017 the Sweden-based Varieties of Democracies project has classified India as “an electoral autocracy”; in 2025, it called India “one of the worst autocratizers lately.” Since 2021, U.S.-based Freedom House has redesignated India as “Partly Free,” contending that “Modi and his party are tragically driving India itself toward authoritarianism.” *Democracy Report 2025: 25 Years of Autocratization—Democracy Trumped?* V-Dem Institute (Gothenburg); *Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy Under Siege*, Freedom House.

²⁷⁴ According to the report, “Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious abuses in a conflict; unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflict by Maoist nonstate groups; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; and instances of coerced abortion or forced sterilization (U.S. Department of State, *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, August 12, 2025, <https://perma.cc/NJ3C-AJXC>).

²⁷⁵ USCIRF, *2026 Annual Report*, March 2026, <https://www.uscifr.gov/annual-reports>.

²⁷⁶ U.S. Commission on International Relations Freedom, “Systematic Religious Persecution in India,” November 2025.

²⁷⁷ India Hate Lab, *Report 2025: Hate Speech Events in India*, Center for the Study of Organized Hate, January 13, 2026.

²⁷⁸ See CRS In Focus IF12198, *India: Human Rights Assessments*, by K. Alan Kronstadt. The France-based Reporters Without Borders ranked India 151st of 180 world countries on its *2025 Press Freedoms Index*, down from 142nd in 2021 (see <https://rsf.org/en/index>).

²⁷⁹ The World Economic Forum’s *Global Gender Gap 2025* ranked India 131st of 148 countries (a decline from 2024), including 144th in “Economic Participation and Opportunity” and 143rd in “Health and Survival” (see <https://tinyurl.com/3x6svayd>).

The country's "Tier 2" designation means India "does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so."²⁸⁰

In 2023, the U.S. and Canadian governments alleged connections between the Indian government and two assassination plots targeting Indian Sikhs; U.S. and Canadian investigations into the criminal cases are ongoing.²⁸¹ The Biden Administration demanded accountability from India,²⁸² and some Members of Congress aired concerns that the alleged actions could negatively affect the bilateral partnership.²⁸³ India's government—which views overseas Sikh separatists as a national security threat—reportedly is undertaking a broader campaign of transnational repression against the Sikh diaspora.²⁸⁴ In February 2026, an Indian national confessed to his role in the plot on U.S. soil; federal prosecutors allege that an Indian intelligence officer, who remains at large, directed the plot.²⁸⁵ The Trump Administration has not publicly addressed the criminal cases or transnational repression of Sikhs to date.

Some observers have urged Congress to consider legislation or take other actions aimed at strengthening democracy and freedoms of expression globally and/or in India, including with respect to religious freedom.²⁸⁶ USCIRF, for example, recommends that Congress consider urging the Administration to designate India as a CPC; press Delhi to allow U.S. government entities such as USCIRF and the State Department to conduct in-country assessments of religious freedom conditions; impose targeted sanctions on Indian individuals and entities found to be responsible for severe violations of religious freedom; and link future U.S. security assistance and bilateral trade policies with India to improvements in religious freedom, among other actions. Congress may also consider whether to reintroduce and pass the Transnational Repression Reporting Act of 2024 (H.R. 9707 in the 118th Congress), which sought to establish a reporting requirement for cases of transnational repression against U.S. persons.²⁸⁷

U.S. Foreign Assistance

The Trump Administration's suspension of most U.S. foreign aid and its dismantlement of USAID in 2025 has affected U.S. foreign assistance to India.²⁸⁸ From India's 1947 independence through 2025, the United States has provided more than \$17 billion in foreign aid, primarily through economic grants and food aid. For the period FY2020-FY2024, aid flows averaged about \$190 million annually, focused mainly on health care and development programs. The Administration has not published data on how much aid previously obligated for India was cut,

²⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State, *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report*, <https://perma.cc/F63N-KUY7>.

²⁸¹ Taran Dugal, "The Sikh-Separatist Assassination Plot," *New Yorker*, November 7, 2025.

²⁸² "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and NSC Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby," White House transcript, November 30, 2023.

²⁸³ See, for example, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "Chair Cardin Statement on DOJ Announcement Related to Foiled Assassination Plot in New York," press release, November 29, 2023, <https://perma.cc/JC5U-GZ4Y>.

²⁸⁴ Sikhs are a majority in India's Punjab state and Sikh militants fought an unsuccessful separatist war against the Indian state in the 1980s and 1990s. Delhi continues to view some Sikh diasporans as terrorists (see Indian External Affairs Ministry, "Transcript of Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson," September 21, 2023; CRS Insight IN12292, *Alleged Indian Role in Transnational Assassination Plots*, by K. Alan Kronstadt).

²⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, "Indian National Pleads Guilty to Plotting to Assassinate U.S. Citizen in New York City," press release, February 13, 2026, <https://perma.cc/9K6B-E7AS>.

²⁸⁶ See, for example, Freedom House's policy recommendations at <https://freedomhouse.org/policy-recommendations>.

²⁸⁷ U.S. Commission on International Relations Freedom, *2026 Annual Report*, March 2026.

²⁸⁸ See CRS In Focus IF10261, *U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview*, by Emily M. McCabe.

but partial reporting indicates obligations of just under \$89 million for FY2025, according to [Foreignassistance.gov](https://www.foreignassistance.gov) data. India has been an emerging donor country since the early 2010s.²⁸⁹

USAID's closure elicited criticism from former U.S. presidents and several global leaders, and some DC-based analysts asserted that the decision to cut aid "is removing one of the United States' most important tools to compete effectively with the PRC" in the Indo-Pacific region and "will undermine U.S. global influence and power."²⁹⁰ The Modi government did not comment publicly, but since taking office in 2014 it has welcomed USAID programming in India.²⁹¹ Some analyses have indicated that relevant Indian health and development projects were not being significantly affected by USAID's shuttering; others seemingly confirmed a human cost, especially in the healthcare sector.²⁹² Some figures in India's ruling party lauded the Trump Administration's closure of USAID; one senior party spokesperson accused "the lunatic Left in India" of living off agency "handouts."²⁹³ A media outlet widely considered a Hindu nationalist voice argued that USAID had been "instrumental in funding NGOs, media houses, and so-called activist networks that propagate narratives detrimental to India's sovereignty and cultural fabric."²⁹⁴ (Hindutva groups reportedly have themselves been beneficiaries of U.S. aid.²⁹⁵)

Among pending bills in the 119th Congress are S.Res. 51, expressing the sense of the Senate that USAID is essential for advancing U.S. national security interests; H.R. 1029, to abolish USAID; and the Protect U.S. National Security Act (H.R. 1196), which would prohibit the use of Federal funds to eliminate USAID.

India's Other Selected Foreign Relations

Pakistan and the Kashmir Issue

India's deep-seated rivalry with neighboring Pakistan is unabated after nearly eight decades. The nuclear-armed countries have fought four wars since 1948, three of them over the disputed former princely state of Kashmir, which has been divided by a heavily militarized, 470-mile-long Line of Control (LOC) since 1971. India's military is much larger and better funded than Pakistan's, and possesses considerably more equipment (see **Figure 3**). Yet India's more diverse security challenges—including far longer coastlines and borders, and a 2,200-mile-long disputed frontier

²⁸⁹ András Derzsi-Horváth, "India as a Humanitarian Donor in the 21st Century: The Seeds of a More Ambitious Role" (working paper), Global Public Policy Institute (Berlin), April 5, 2013.

²⁹⁰ "USAID Closure Sparks Widespread Criticism from Former Presidents and Global Leaders," *National News Desk*, July 2, 2025; Lisa Curtis, Kareen Hart, and Keerthi Martyn, "Democracy in South Asia amid U.S. Aid Cuts," Center for a New American Security, May 15, 2025.

²⁹¹ "Modi Govt Has Not Been Averse to USAID Support to Projects in India," *Deccan Herald* (Bengaluru), February 19, 2025; "What USAID Gives in India, to Whom," *Indian Express* (Delhi), March 7, 2025; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Joint Statement During the Visit of President of USA to India," January 25, 2015, <https://perma.cc/R8DS-AZME>; White House, "Joint Statement: Vision and Principles for the United States-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," February 25, 2020, <https://perma.cc/T7FN-33SB>.

²⁹² Joyjayanti Chatterjee, "When Donors Leave: Lessons from USAID's Exit and India's Funding Shifts," *On Think Tanks*, September 25, 2025; Rishabh Jain, "India's Tuberculosis Patients, One Year After USAID's Dismantling," *Think Global Health* (online), February 4, 2026.

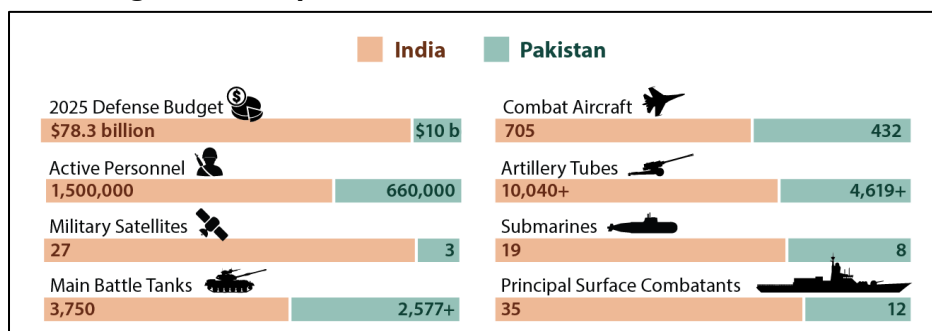
²⁹³ Snigdendu Bhattacharya, "Why India's Ruling BJP Is Celebrating Trump's Crackdown on USAID," *Diplomat*, February 21, 2025; Amit Malviya's February 3, 2025, social media post at <https://tinyurl.com/yacbc3c8>.

²⁹⁴ Pankaj Jagannath Jayswal, "Left Ecosystem and Their Anti-Humanitarian Efforts Utilizing USAID," *Organizer* (Delhi), February 13, 2025.

²⁹⁵ "An Unnoticed Fact: The RSS, India's Biggest NGO, Gets Foreign Funding Too," *Scroll* (Delhi), June 13, 2014; "Sangh Parivar's U.S. Funds Trail," *Frontline* (Chennai), July 4, 2021.

with China—combined with Pakistan’s large stocks of artillery and rockets, lead to at least one assessment that Pakistan enjoys advantages in the realms of land power and geography.²⁹⁶ Pakistani analysts also claim their country maintains “strategic parity” with India based on comparable nuclear weapons arsenals.²⁹⁷

Figure 3. Comparison of Indian and Pakistani Militaries



Source: CRS with information from *The Military Balance 2026*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London), February 2026.

In 2019, India’s central government abrogated the limited (and largely nominal) constitutional autonomy of its Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir state and bifurcated it into two successor “union territories,” each with reduced administrative powers (see **Figure 4**). In May 2025, India and Pakistan fought a four-day military conflict, their most intense in 54 years, following an April terrorist attack in India-administered Kashmir that Delhi blamed on Pakistan (Pakistan denied involvement).²⁹⁸ While a ceasefire has held through April 2026, tensions remain high. Since the ceasefire began, Delhi has been holding in “abeyance” the bilateral Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) of 1960, on which Pakistan depends for nearly all of its water supply.²⁹⁹ Pakistani leaders reportedly have accused India of “weaponizing” water by manipulating downstream flows, while local observers in both countries worry that climate stresses and ongoing hydropower projects are increasingly costly in both environmental and human terms.³⁰⁰

Many analysts see limited evidence that the halt in fighting reflects a return to previous patterns of restraint.³⁰¹ Pakistani officials regularly blame India for allegedly sponsoring anti-Pakistan terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan, charges Delhi denies.³⁰² The Indian government claims scores of Pakistan-sponsored terrorists are ready to infiltrate into India-administered Kashmir from bases near the LOC.³⁰³ India continues to insist that issues between the two

²⁹⁶ “Comparison of India and Pakistan Military Strengths (2026),” Global Firepower, <https://tinyurl.com/mps4d7n7>.

²⁹⁷ “Transcript: Better Know a Nuke: Pakistan,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, April 2, 2025.

²⁹⁸ Harsh Pant and Sameer Patil, eds. *In the Aftermath of Operation Sindoor: Escalation, Deterrence, and India-Pakistan Strategic Stability*, Observer Research Foundation (Delhi), June 2025; see also CRS In Focus IF13000, *India-Pakistan Conflict in Spring 2025*, by K. Alan Kronstadt.

²⁹⁹ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Transcript of Special briefing by MEA,” April 25, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/33tdkbc>; “How India’s Threat to Block Rivers Could Devastate Pakistan,” *New York Times*, April 24, 2025.

³⁰⁰ “Pakistan Accuses India of ‘Weaponizing Water’ and Threatening Stability,” Associated Press, December 19, 2025; Safina Nabi, “India and Pakistan’s Water Politics Is Starting to Boil,” *Foreign Policy*, February 16, 2026.

³⁰¹ See, for example, Aqil Shah, “The Next War Between India and Pakistan,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 23, 2025.

³⁰² See the Pakistan military’s Inter-Services Public Relations press releases at <https://ispr.gov.pk>; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Statement on References to India and Comments Made by Pakistan at the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers’ Meeting,” press release, June 23, 2025.

³⁰³ “Statement on References to India and Comments Made by Pakistan at the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers’ Meeting,” press release, June 23, 2025.

countries “should be resolved bilaterally and peacefully in an atmosphere free of terror, hostility and violence,” and that “The onus is on Pakistan to create such a conducive environment.”³⁰⁴ The second Trump Administration’s warming of ties with Pakistan is of ongoing concern to some Indian observers.³⁰⁵ During his June 2025 confirmation hearing, current Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Paul Kapur told a Senate panel that the previous month’s India-Pakistan conflict “is deeply concerning and has shown us that we must continue our counterterrorism cooperation across the region. The U.S. shares national security interests with both countries, and we need peace between them.”³⁰⁶

Figure 4. Map of the Kashmir Region



China

India and neighboring China together account for more than one-third of global population and one-fifth of global GDP. Many scholars assert that India’s pursuit of and support for multipolarity in global affairs is substantively motivated by antipathy toward the emergence of a Sino-centric Asia. Numerous Indian officials and policy analysts have, over the past 10-15 years, transitioned to identifying China rather than Pakistan as India’s overriding foreign policy concern.³⁰⁷ Many

³⁰⁴ India Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report 2024-2025*, June 26, 2025, <https://perma.cc/VH8B-R3DV>.

³⁰⁵ See, for example, Happymon Jacob, “Curious Case of Pakistan’s Geopolitical Rehabilitation” (op-ed), *Hindustan Times* (Delhi), September 28, 2025.

³⁰⁶ “Senate Foreign Relations Committee Holds Hearing on Pending Nominations,” CQ Congressional Transcripts, June 10, 2025.

³⁰⁷ CRS interviews in New Delhi, India, September 2023.

analysts also see India competing with China for leadership of the “Global South.”³⁰⁸ Others believe the two countries are battling for economic primacy. Since 1990, China’s economic growth has vastly outpaced that of India,³⁰⁹ which continues to be dependent on critical imports from China.³¹⁰ In 2017, India (and Pakistan) joined the PRC-based Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a 10-member Eurasian grouping that also includes Russia. Some Indian analysts contend that the SCO can play a role in stabilizing India-China relations.³¹¹

Many Indian analysts argue that China enables and supports Pakistan to pursue hostilities against India.³¹² The great majority (75%) of China’s defense exports go to Pakistan and India’s other immediate neighbors (such as Bangladesh and Burma),³¹³ and Delhi closely watches increasing PRC commercial and military activities in both South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.³¹⁴ Per one assessment, “China’s development of port investments in several Indian Ocean littoral states, its high level of military support to Pakistan, and its sale of military assets to Bangladesh and Myanmar have contributed to Indian concerns.”³¹⁵ Riverine disputes over dams being built by upper riparian China and differences over succession of the Tibetan Dalai Lama (who resides in exile in India) continue to strain Delhi-Beijing relations.³¹⁶

A lethal 2020 clash along India’s long-disputed border with China—known as the Line of Actual Control (LOAC)—left at least two dozen soldiers dead and severely damaged trust between Delhi and Beijing.³¹⁷ The focus of the May-June 2020 skirmishes was the northeastern section of India’s Ladakh Union Territory that is claimed by India as Aksai Chin (in the so-called Western Sector of the LOAC; in the Eastern Sector, China claims the entirety of India’s Arunachal Pradesh state as “South Tibet,” see **Figure 5**³¹⁸). India responded with measures to curtail economic ties with China, including passing new investment rules and banning hundreds of PRC mobile applications (TikTok among them).³¹⁹ An October 2024 de-escalation agreement led to broad, tactical-level

³⁰⁸ Manjari Chatterjee Miller, “China and India Compete for Leadership of the Global South,” Council on Foreign Relations, February 1, 2024.

³⁰⁹ According to World Bank data, in 1990 India’s per capita GDP of \$301 (in current dollars) was about 17% greater than that of China. By 2024, China’s per capita income of \$13,303 was five times that of India’s \$2,697 (see <https://data.worldbank.org>).

³¹⁰ These include a large majority of the active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) required for India’s \$50 billion pharma sector, which provides a majority of the world’s generic drugs. Oommen Kurian, “India’s Rise as Global Pharmacy Masks Deep Dependence on China,” Observer Research Foundation (Delhi), December 10, 2025.

³¹¹ SCO members seek cooperation that will “help in making more effective use of emerging possibilities and addressing new challenges and threats amid the dynamic development of processes of political multipolarity and economic and information globalization in the 21st century.” (See <https://eng.sectsc.org>; see also Ivan Lidarev, “The SCO Still Plays a Key Role in China–India Relations,” East Asia Forum (Canberra), November 15, 2025.)

³¹² See, for example, Harsh Pant and Sameer Patil, “In the Aftermath of Operation Sindoor: Escalation, Deterrence, and India-Pakistan Strategic Stability,” Observer Research Foundation (Delhi), June 14, 2025.

³¹³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Arms Transfers Database.

³¹⁴ “Large Presence of Chinese Vessels in Indian Ocean Region, India Keeping Close Qatch: Navy Chief,” Press Trust India, April 29, 2023; Lisa Curtis and Nilanthi Samaranyake, “Countering Coercion: Managing Chinese Gray Zone Activity in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean Region,” Center for a New American Security, March 29, 2024.

³¹⁵ Dhruva Jaishankar, Ammair Nainar, and David Vallance, “Sharing the Burden: Preparing for Maritime Security Competition in the Indo-Pacific,” ORF America, February 2026.

³¹⁶ “China Begins Building World’s Largest Dam, Fueling Fears in India,” BBC News (London), July 21, 2025; “China Says Dalai Lama Succession Issue a ‘Thorn’ in Relations with India,” Reuters, July 13, 2025.

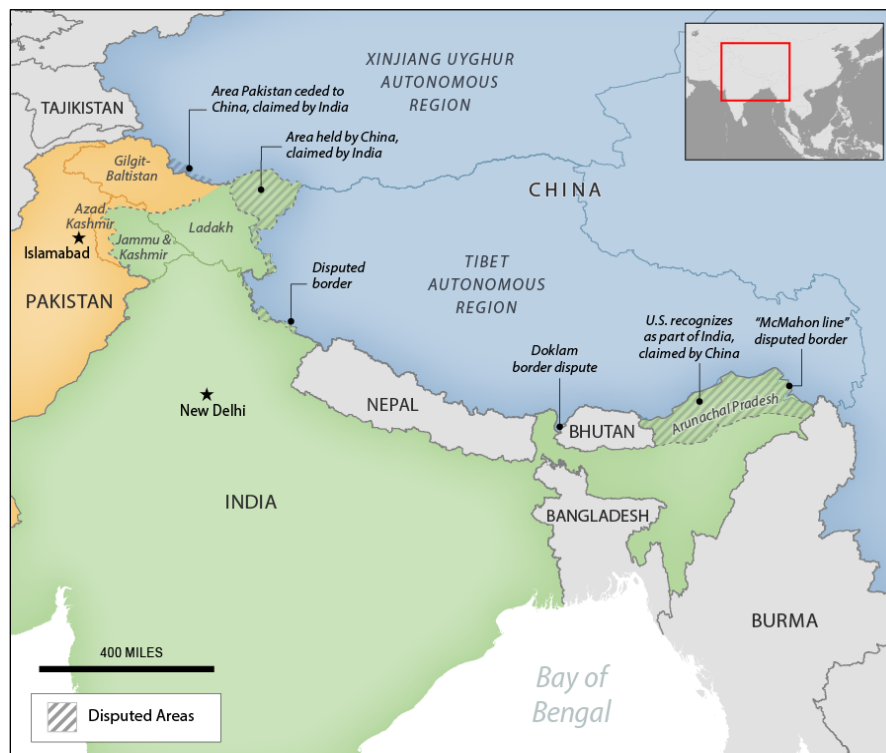
³¹⁷ Arzan Tarapore, “The Long Shadow of the Ladakh Crisis,” *War on the Rocks*, January 14, 2025.

³¹⁸ Resolutions in the 118th Congress (S.Res. 75 and H.Res. 540) would have reaffirmed the U.S. policy position that Arunachal Pradesh in Indian territory and condemned PRC “provocations in South Asia.”

³¹⁹ Tanvi Madan, “China Crisis Has Changed India So There’s No Going Back to 2020” (op-ed), *Times of India* (Delhi), October 26, 2025; “India’s Clampdown on Chinese Products and Investment,” Reuters, October 21, 2024.

disengagement and appeared to stabilize the LOAC, although both countries maintain deployment of tens of thousands of troops and are rapidly upgrading infrastructure at the frontier.³²⁰

Figure 5. Map of the India-China Frontier



Source: Created by CRS. Boundaries from U.S. Department of State (2015), GADM, and ESRI.

Following President Trump’s mid-2025 imposition of tariffs on U.S. imports from India and concurrent diplomatic outreach to Pakistan, India appears to be seeking to repair ties with China, including by engaging in high-level diplomacy after a long hiatus. In July 2025, India’s foreign minister met with his counterpart in Beijing for the first time since 2019. PM Modi followed in August, meeting with President Xi in China for the first time in seven years as the two leaders affirmed that their countries “are partners, not rivals.”³²¹ Subsequent reports suggest continued normalization of the bilateral relationship. As of early 2026, Indian government regulators reportedly are for the first time easing restrictions that were placed on PRC investment in India after the 2020 border skirmish.³²² India’s efforts at rapprochement with China appear driven at least in part by Delhi’s perception that the Trump Administration’s tariff and trade policies and the “targeting of India” have been “unjustified and unreasonable.”³²³ One DC-based expert wrote

³²⁰ “India and China Reach Border Deal That Could Ease Hostilities,” *New York Times*, October 22, 2024; “India Is on a Himalayan Building Spree to Prepare for a Clash with China,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 24, 2025.

³²¹ “EAM’s Visit to China and Meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister,” Ministry of External Affairs release, July 14, 2025; “Prime Minister’s Bilateral Meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping,” Ministry of External Affairs release, August 31, 2025.

³²² “China and India Seek Reset in Talks, But Old Fault Lines Remain,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), February 11, 2026; “India Eases Curbs on Chinese Equipment Imports for Power, Coal as Projects Delayed, Sources Say,” Reuters, February 18, 2026.

³²³ See the Ministry of External Affairs’ August 4, 2025, release at <https://tinyurl.com/msvzxn42>. See also CRS Insight IN12604, *The Indian Prime Minister’s 2025 Visit to China and India-China Relations*, by Ricardo Barrios and K. Alan Kronstadt.

in mid-2025 that “Trump is weakening the hands of those in India who advocate for closer ties to the United States.”³²⁴

Congress may wish to consider legislation or other actions to support India’s ability to secure its borders, including by offering India advanced weapons and bolstering its naval capabilities, and strengthening intelligence sharing; it may also consider whether such support may contribute to other regional conflicts. Congress may also wish to consider whether or not to formally express support for India in the case of another border conflict with China, as has been recommended by some analysts.³²⁵

Russia

India has since 2010 maintained a “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership” with Russia—a prominent sign of Delhi’s commitment to strategic autonomy.³²⁶ (Delhi’s close ties with Moscow date back more than five decades.) In December 2025, Russian President Vladimir Putin paid a state visit to Delhi, where he was praised as a “great friend” by PM Modi.³²⁷ Russia has for decades been a key supplier to India of advanced defense materiel and technologies, as well as energy resources. Many U.S. and Indian analysts see India valuing close ties with Russia in large part as a hedge against Russia-China cooperation.³²⁸

Russia continues to be India’s top source of defense articles, although Delhi is diversifying suppliers.³²⁹ Still, reports suggest that further major sales of Russian defense kit are in the works, some of which could trigger U.S. sanctions under Section 231 of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA, P.L. 115-44), enacted in 2017, which targets “significant transactions” with Russia’s defense or intelligence sectors.³³⁰ Delhi is increasing commerce further with Russia and pursuing other avenues of cooperation. These include a goal of boosting bilateral trade by 50% by 2030 to \$100 billion; finalizing a Bilateral Investment Treaty; and developing connectivity initiatives such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor, and the Northern Sea Route.³³¹

³²⁴ Tanvi Madan, “India Doesn’t Want to Need China,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 24, 2025.

³²⁵ Lisa Curtis and Derek Grossman, “India-China Border Tensions and U.S. Strategy in the Indo-Pacific,” Center for a New American Security, March 30, 2023.

³²⁶ “India-Russia Ties Among ‘Steadiest’ Globally: Jaishankar,” Press Trust India, December 6, 2025; “Modi Says Russia and India Stand Together Even in Difficult Times,” Reuters, September 1, 2025; “‘From 1965...’: S Jaishankar Explains Strong Defence Ties with Russia,” Press Trust India, September 26, 2022.

³²⁷ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “English Translation of Prime Minister’s Press Statement during Joint Press Statement with the President of Russia” (transcript), December 5, 2025, <https://perma.cc/V968-6HSA>.

³²⁸ U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, *2025 Worldwide Threat Assessment*, May 2025, <https://perma.cc/RA6P-VZS7>; Pankaj Saran and Raj Kumar Sharma, “Russia-Ukraine War: Takeaways for India,” NatStrat (Delhi), April 10, 2024.

³²⁹ “Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2024,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute fact sheet, March 2025.

³³⁰ “India, Russia in Talks to Acquire 5 More S-400 Air Defense Systems,” *Hindustan Times* (Delhi), October 6, 2025; “Top Indian Arms Makers Held Rare Meetings in Russia on Potential Joint Ventures, Sources Say,” Reuters, December 9, 2025. The House-passed NDAA for FY2023 (H.R. 7900) included a call for the waiver of potential CAATSA sanctions on India, but the provision did not appear in the enacted version.

³³¹ The planned 4,500-mile-long INSTC, first proposed in 2000, is a multi-modal network of roads, railways, and sea routes that would connect India to Central Asia and Eurasia via Iran’s Chabahar port. The Northern Sea Route is a potential alternative shipping line that would connect Russia’s northeastern coast to the Pacific Ocean via the Bering Strait (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “English Translation of Prime Minister’s Press Statement During Joint Press Statement with the President of Russia” (transcript), December 5, 2025, <https://perma.cc/V968-6HSA>).

India's studied neutrality on Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has rankled U.S. officials, including some in Congress.³³² Indian purchases of Russian oil spiked from comprising less than 1% of all Indian oil imports in 2021 to about 45% by mid-2023,³³³ by some accounts enabling Russia to prosecute its war.³³⁴ Discounts on Russian oil of 10% or more, which reportedly saved India about \$5 billion per year, allowed Indian refiners to export petroleum products to other regions, including the European Union, where direct oil purchases from Russia are banned.³³⁵ In the 119th Congress, the pending Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025 (S. 1241), with 84 Senate cosponsors, would impose a 500% import duty on any country that knowingly sells, supplies, transfers, or purchases oil, uranium, natural gas, petroleum products, or petrochemical products that originated in the Russian Federation, among other provisions.³³⁶

India's importation of Russian oil elicited new Trump Administration ire in mid-2025 and the imposition of secondary sanctions on India (through an additional 25% tariff on imports) in August 2025.³³⁷ The Modi government rejected U.S. "targeting" of India as unjust.³³⁸ In early 2026, India's importation of Russian oil appeared to be down sharply, but credible estimates showed India importing around one million barrels per day (bpd) in February.³³⁹ A February 2026 White House Executive Order stated that India "has committed to stop directly or indirectly importing" Russian oil. CRS has not identified any official statements by India's government confirming this assertion.³⁴⁰ In early March 2026, with U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran disrupting oil markets and potentially threatening Indian supplies, the U.S. Treasury Department granted India a 30-day waiver on Russia-related oil sanctions.³⁴¹ A general waiver was issued in April extending for Russian oil loaded on vessels as of April 17, reportedly benefitting India especially, with purchases above two million bpd expected for April and May.³⁴²

³³² "Modi Bear-Hugs Putin in Moscow, Marking Deep Ties Between Russia and India," *Washington Post*, July 9, 2024.

³³³ "How India Became One of the Biggest Buyers of Russian Oil," *New York Times*, July 31, 2025.

³³⁴ "In Russia's War, China and India Emerge as Financiers," *New York Times*, June 24, 2022; "Top Trump Aide Accuses India of Financing Russia's War in Ukraine," Reuters, August 3, 2025.

³³⁵ "Cheap Oil, High Stakes: Can India Do Without Russia?" BBC News, October 16, 2025; "How India Profits from Its Neutrality in the Ukraine War," *New York Times*, June 22, 2023.

³³⁶ Also pending in the 119th Congress are the Decreasing Russian Oil Profits Act of 2026 (H.R. 7506; a Senate version is S. 3513), to impose sanctions with respect to foreign persons dealing in crude oil or petroleum products of Russian Federation origin, and S.Res. 549, a resolution urging the Trump Administration to seize shadow fleet vessels transporting sanctioned oil from the Russian Federation.

³³⁷ White House, "Addressing Threats to The United States by the Government of the Russian Federation," Executive Order, August 6, 2025, <https://perma.cc/XUC9-GK3W>. H.J.Res. 134, introduced in December 2025, would terminate the national emergency declared to impose duties on articles imported from India.

³³⁸ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Statement by Official Spokesperson," press release, August 4, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/msvzxn42>.

³³⁹ "China's Russian Oil Imports to Hit New Record in February as India Cuts Back," Reuters, February 16, 2026.

³⁴⁰ White House, "Modifying Duties to Address Threats to the United States by the Government of the Russian Federation," Executive Order, February 6, 2026, <https://perma.cc/Y3SJ-XKQH>; "For India, Buying Russian Oil Just Got More Complicated," *New York Times*, February 21, 2026.

³⁴¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, "Authorizing the Delivery and Sale of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products of Russian Federation Origin Loaded on Vessels as of March 5, 2026 to India," <https://perma.cc/U8S4-52MW>.

³⁴² U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, "Issuance of Russia-Related General License," April 17, 2026, <https://perma.cc/8THJ-YF6T>; "US Waiver Set to Keep Russian Oil Exports to India Near Record High," Reuters, April 21, 2026.

Afghanistan

India claims extensive historical and civilizational ties with Afghanistan, and Delhi was the leading regional contributor to Afghan reconstruction from 2003 to 2021.³⁴³ India's substantive diplomatic outreach to Afghanistan's Taliban regime, which took power in 2021, began in early 2025. In the latter months of the year, Delhi moved to both upgrade its "Technical Mission" in Kabul to a full Embassy and articulate plans for boosting bilateral trade and connectivity.³⁴⁴ Pakistan's government insists that Delhi is actively recruiting, training, and arming several militant groups that attack Pakistan from bases in Afghanistan, charges India rejects.³⁴⁵ Analysts contend that strengthened Indian ties with Afghanistan are meant to counter Pakistan and PRC influence in the region, as well as to enable connectivity with Central Asia.³⁴⁶

Bangladesh

India and Bangladesh share close bonds of history, language, and culture, and India played a key facilitating role in Bangladesh's 1971 liberation from West Pakistan. In 2024, violent student-led protests in Bangladesh led to the ouster of its prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, and her replacement by an interim government. Hasina, a longtime friend to Delhi, fled to India and was in November 2025 sentenced to death in absentia for war crimes by a Bangladeshi court. Delhi's refusal to extradite Hasina, combined with acute concerns in India about reported violent repression targeting Bangladesh's Hindu minority, brought serious and ongoing discord to the bilateral relationship.³⁴⁷ New diplomatic outreach to Bangladesh by both China (a provider of significant port and other infrastructure investment, along with major weapons platforms) and Pakistan (Bangladesh was East Pakistan from 1947 to 1971) have some analysts worried that India's reported fears of "encirclement" by adversaries will be exacerbated.³⁴⁸ In February 2026, Bangladesh held elections to seat a new national government. PM Modi congratulated the newly seated Bangladeshi leader and reaffirmed his government's commitment to restoring positive ties.³⁴⁹ Some Indian pundits have expressed concerns about the future role to be played by Bangladesh's newly empowered Islamist factions.³⁵⁰

³⁴³ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Question No. 183, India's Relationship with Afghanistan," release, December 15, 2023.

³⁴⁴ "Why Is India Courting the Taliban Now?" *Al Jazeera* (Doha), January 11, 2025; P. Stobdan, "India Forges Ties with the Taliban," Delhi Policy Group (Delhi), June 3, 2025; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Upgradation of the Technical Mission of India in Kabul to Embassy of India," press release, October 21, 2025; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Visit of Minister of Industry and Commerce of Afghanistan to India," press release, November 25, 2025.

³⁴⁵ "Naqvi Points Finger at India for Violence; BNP-M Chief Sounds Alarm," *Dawn* (Karachi), February 1, 2026; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Official Spokesperson's Response to Media Queries Regarding Comments Made by Pakistan," press release, February 1, 2026.

³⁴⁶ "Indian Outreach to Taliban Is Ratcheting Up Afghan-Pakistani Tensions," *Washington Post*, November 30, 2025; C. Raja Mohan, "The Taliban's Entry into India-Pakistan Rivalry," *Foreign Policy*, November 3, 2025; "Has India's Influence in Afghanistan Grown Under the Taliban?" *Al Jazeera* (Doha), February 21, 2026.

³⁴⁷ "Anti-India Backlash Sweeps Bangladesh in Challenge for Modi," Bloomberg, September 5, 2024; "The Dimming of Bangladesh-India Relations," International Institute for Strategic Studies (London), February 25, 2025; "Crisis in India-Bangladesh Relations Spirals amid Violent Protests," BBC News, December 23, 2025.

³⁴⁸ Derek Grossman, "India Is Losing Bangladesh to China and Pakistan—and It Could Get Worse," RAND, December 26, 2024; Michael Kugelman, "Bangladesh-Pakistan Ties Get Dramatic Reset," *Foreign Policy*, August 25, 2025.

³⁴⁹ Indian Prime Minister's Office, "Prime Minister Congratulates Tarique Rahman on Bangladesh Election Victory," press release, February 13, 2026.

³⁵⁰ "Islamist Party's Rise Overshadows Student Revolution in Bangladesh," *New York Times*, February 15, 2026. See also CRS Insight IN12663, *Elections in Bangladesh*, by Maria A. Blackwood.

Iran

India's relations with Iran traditionally have been positive, marked by millennia of interactions between the Indus Valley and Persian civilizations, and India historically has been among Iran's top five trade partners.³⁵¹ As India has grown closer to the United States and other Western countries over the past two decades, its Iran policy has become more nuanced.³⁵² Still, India supported Iran's full membership in the SCO in 2023 and its inclusion in the 2024 BRICS expansion. Delhi's flagship bilateral cooperative project has been Iran's Arabian Sea port at Chabahar, where in 2016 India announced a willingness to invest up to \$500 million for port development. India's ports ministry has called Chabahar "a key strategic asset for India" to connect with Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan, and stated that U.S. sanctions on Iran have had a "detrimental effect" on the port's development.³⁵³ In September 2025, the U.S. State Department announced that it was revoking a sanctions exception for Chabahar issued in 2018, potentially leaving investors in the port subject to U.S. sanctions.³⁵⁴ Some analysts say the decision may undermine India's policy goals in the region and possibly even mark the end of India's efforts to develop Chabahar.³⁵⁵ In January 2026, India joined six other countries—including China, Pakistan, and Cuba—in voting against a UN Human Rights Council resolution condemning the Iranian government's violent repression of protesters.³⁵⁶ Following the February 28, 2026, launch of U.S. and Israeli military operations against Iran, Delhi expressed deep concern and urged all parties to exercise restraint and avoid escalation.³⁵⁷

Israel

PM Modi's government has engaged Middle Eastern states with greater vigor than previous governments, arguably boosting India's regional influence.³⁵⁸ Delhi has over the past decade deepened its historically cool ties with Israel, likely at some cost to its relations with Palestine, in the views of some analysts.³⁵⁹ PM Modi paid a February 2026 visit to Israel, where the two countries "reaffirmed their shared vision for a robust special strategic partnership."³⁶⁰ Some observers see Modi and his Hindu nationalist party as sympathetic toward Israel and as a fellow

³⁵¹ "India Can't Shake Iran's Ghosts as Trump Opens New Box of Worries," *Economic Times* (Delhi), January 12, 2026.

³⁵² This was seen, for example, with Delhi's 2005 and 2009 International Atomic Energy Agency votes joining Western (and other) countries in censuring Iran's nuclear program, and with Delhi's late 2010s willingness to drastically reduce and then, in 2019, cease importation of Iranian oil in full cooperation with U.S.-led sanctions.

³⁵³ Indian Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, *Amrit Kaal Vision 2047*, December 1, 2023.

³⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Targeting Financial Network Generating Millions for Iranian Military and Additional Actions in Support of Maximum Pressure on Iran," press statement, September 17, 2025, <https://perma.cc/R75F-GX3M>.

³⁵⁵ Ayjaz Wani, "Chabahar Wrong Port of Call for US," Observer Research Foundation (Delhi), September 24, 2025; "India's Turbulent Involvement in Iran's Chabahar Port All But Collapses," *Economic Times* (Delhi), January 15, 2026.

³⁵⁶ See Resolution S-39/L.1 at <https://www.universal-rights.org/human-rights/human-rights-resolutions-portal>.

³⁵⁷ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Statement on the Evolving Situation in West Asia," press statement, February 28, 2026.

³⁵⁸ Steven Cook, "India Has Become a Middle Eastern Power," *Foreign Policy*, June 30, 2023.

³⁵⁹ "How Modi 'Broke Down Walls' Between India, Israel at Palestine's Expense," *Al Jazeera* (Doha), February 23, 2026.

³⁶⁰ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "India-Israel Joint Statement," February 26, 2026.

victim of Islamist terrorism.³⁶¹ Analysts widely viewed India’s official response to Hamas’s October 2023 attacks on Israel—condemning the attacks and standing “in solidarity” with the Jewish state—as the continuation of an existing shift in Indian policy.³⁶² One called it “a meaningful and likely durable strategic tilt toward Israel.”³⁶³ Israel has emerged as a major supplier of defense articles and technology for India: from 2016 through 2025, Delhi reportedly purchased \$3.9 billion worth of Israeli defense articles, accounting for 15% of India’s total imports and more than one-third of Israeli exports by value during that period.³⁶⁴ More substantive security links are developing, and broader trade ties have deepened in recent years, especially with a surge in India’s exports to Israel of petroleum products.³⁶⁵ It remains to be seen how, if at all, the Israel-Iran conflict may affect these developments.³⁶⁶

Gulf Cooperation Council Countries

While expanding ties with Israel, Delhi has concurrently redoubled outreach to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia (the Riyadh-based GCC has six members, all of them Persian Gulf monarchies). About one-third (~\$45 billion) of India’s global foreign remittances in 2024 reportedly came from GCC states, including nearly 20% from the UAE alone, according to press reports.³⁶⁷ Indian nationals reportedly account for more than one-third of all UAE residents.³⁶⁸ A new set of bilateral pacts was inked during the UAE leader’s January 2026 visit to India; some analysts see a wealth of trade and investment benefits for Delhi in its relations with Abu Dhabi.³⁶⁹ Despite its close ties with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia has been a key energy supplier for India, and Delhi and Riyadh vowed in 2025 to expand their “strategic partnership council.”³⁷⁰ Pundits are debating how Delhi might respond to a 2025 Saudi-Pakistan defense agreement—which reportedly may become a three-way pact to include Turkey—including the extent to which the deal might impact Saudi-India economic relations and the implementation of IMEC.³⁷¹ India is heavily reliant on imported oil, and nearly half of such imports pass through the Straits of Hormuz. Thus, combined with the large number of Indian workers in the region, the Persian Gulf military conflict in March-April 2026 may become a

³⁶¹ “Modi: India Stands with Israel ‘With Full Conviction,’” *Deutsche Welle* (Berlin), February 25, 2026; Rana Ayyub, “India’s Ruling Party Is Using the Israel-Gaza War to Demonize Muslims” (op-ed), *Washington Post*, November 29, 2023; “India’s History of Terror Makes It Sympathetic Toward Israel’s War,” *Jerusalem Post*, January 12, 2024.

³⁶² Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Speaks with Prime Minister of Israel,” press release, October 10, 2023.

³⁶³ Daniel Markey, “Amid War in the Middle East, India-Israel Ties Reach New Milestone,” U.S. Institute of Peace, Nov. 7, 2023. See also Sumit Ganguly, “Modi’s Comments on Israel-Gaza War Signal Shift,” *Diplomat*, Oct. 12, 2023.

³⁶⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Arms Transfers Database.

³⁶⁵ Indian Ministry of Defense, “17th India-Israel Joint Working Group Meeting on Defense Cooperation Held in Tel Aviv,” press release, November 4, 2025; “Modi Visit to Israel Marks Deepening of Longstanding Israel-India Defense, Security Ties,” *Jerusalem Post*, February 24, 2026.

³⁶⁶ Michael Kugelman, “Where Does India Stand on the Israel-Iran Conflict?” *Foreign Policy*, June 18, 2025.

³⁶⁷ “Indians Abroad Sent Home a Record \$135 Billion Last Year,” *India Today* (Delhi), June 30, 2025.

³⁶⁸ “United Arab Emirates (UAE) Population Statistics 2025,” Global Media Insights (Dubai), June 3, 2025. See also Manjari Chatterjee Miller, “New Delhi’s Balancing Act in a Chaotic Middle East,” Council on Foreign Relations, March 4, 2024.

³⁶⁹ Indian Prime Minister’s Office, “List of Outcomes: Visit of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of UAE to India,” January 19, 2026, <https://perma.cc/RN3J-YSWG>; Lalit Kapur, “The India-UAE Convergence Continues,” Delhi Policy Group *Indo-Pacific Monitor*, February 2024.

³⁷⁰ “Saudi Arabia, India Expand Strategic Partnership Council, Pledge Closer International Coordination,” Saudi Press Agency, April 23, 2025.

³⁷¹ Eleonora Ardemagni, “The Saudi-Pakistan Defense Pact Highlights the Gulf’s Evolving Strategic Calculus,” Atlantic Council, September 26, 2025.

serious threat to the Indian economy.³⁷² In early March 2026, Delhi commented that the safety of the nearly 10 million Indian nationals living in the region was “of utmost priority.”³⁷³

The “BRICS”

India has since 2009 participated in the “BRICS” grouping, originally comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa joining a year later. The group became “BRICS Plus” with the inclusion of Iran, Egypt, the UAE, and Ethiopia in 2024. Indonesia became the 10th member in 2025. Although internal cleavages are prominent, the grouping seeks to champion the causes of the “Global South” and foster greater multipolarity in the international system. Analysts debate whether BRICS is “anti-Western”—a position denied by Delhi—or merely non-Western in orientation. President Trump himself reportedly has accused BRICS of being “anti-American.”³⁷⁴ In the 119th Congress, the Senate-passed version of the NDAA for FY2026 (S. 2296) included a finding that U.S. adversaries are cooperating “through expanded multilateral groupings” such as the BRICS “to isolate and erode the influence of the United States.” This language did not appear in the enacted version. A January 2026 BRICS Plus joint maritime exercise off the South African coast included forces from China, Russia, and Iran, but founding members India and Brazil did not participate.³⁷⁵

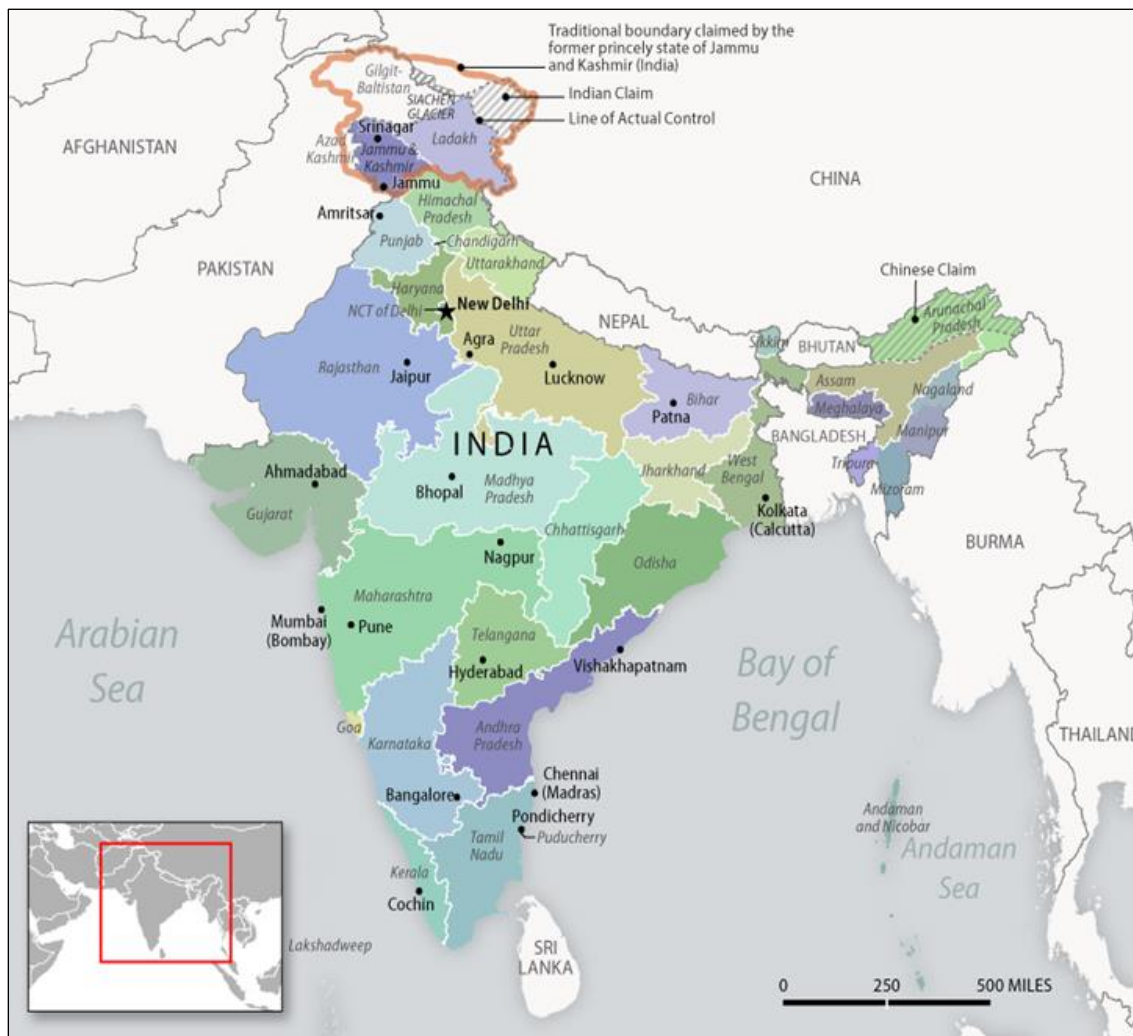
³⁷² “From Oil to Remittances, How Exposed India Is to Crisis,” *Business Standard* (Mumbai), March 2, 2026.

³⁷³ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, “Statement by Official Spokesperson on Ongoing Conflict in the West Asia Region,” March 3, 2026.

³⁷⁴ Stewart Patrick, et al. “BRICS Expansion and the Future of World Order: Perspectives from Member States, Partners, and Aspirants,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 31, 2025; Munich Security Report 2025, February 2025, <https://perma.cc/2BKX-63ZG>; “Trump Threatens Extra 10% Tariff on Countries That Align with ‘Anti-American’ BRICS Policies,” *CNBC*, July 6, 2025.

³⁷⁵ “BRICS Wargames: Why They Matter, Why India Opted Out,” *Al Jazeera* (Doha), January 11, 2026.

Figure 6. Map of Indian States



Source: Graphic created by CRS. Map information generated by using data from <http://www.mapsofindia.com>, Department of State international boundary files (2015); Esri (2014); and DeLorme (2014).

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