



**HOW THE INDIA-US PARTNERSHIP
DEEPENED FOR THE LONG TERM
UNDER BIDEN**

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The visit of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United States for meetings, both bilaterally as well as a part of the [Quad Summit](#) in September 2024, draws the spotlight to the [state of US-India relations](#) under the Biden administration.

The Biden presidency has proven somewhat epochal in leading India and the United States on a multi-generational partnership requiring multiple administrations and many years of substantive efforts. Changes relate to (a) US support for India's technological rise and massive expansion of the partnership in the tech sector, (b) US acknowledgement of India's role as an important player in the Indo-Pacific region and a key partner in the US Indo-Pacific strategy, (c) consolidation of [Quad](#) as an important grouping for regional and global good, (d) call on active participation of both public and private players in shaping the bilateral partnership and (e) keeping the partnership on track notwithstanding serious challenges.

Probably the most comprehensive and forward-looking initiative of the Biden era is the US push for India's capacity building in the field of critical and emerging technologies. The two countries signed an [Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology](#) (iCET) in May 2022 that has opened a wide range of areas for bilateral cooperation in the field of artificial intelligence, quantum technology, space, 6G mobile tech, semiconductor supply chain, and so on. The two countries have forged similar partnerships in the fields

of clean energy—[the US-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 partnership](#) that would help India achieve its 2030 clean energy target of 450 GW of renewable energy and help the US achieve its global climate campaigns. India's capability in some of these areas, such as [quantum technology](#), is extremely limited and therefore the US push including [bilateral quantum initiatives](#) immensely benefit New Delhi's technological rise.

Doubling down on the bilateral tech partnership, India and the United States have also set up very specific, actionable projects involving tangible outcomes and transfer of high-end technologies to Indian industrial ecosystem. Some of these initiatives include [joint production of jet engines](#) for fighter planes, setting up a [semiconductor fabrication plant](#), and development of high-performance computing facilities in India. The Biden administration has also been instrumental in getting India into select tech club such as a 14-member [Mineral Security Partnership](#) and the US-based [Quantum Economic Development Consortium](#) (QED-C), a consortium of institutions headquartered in 39 countries. The US overture to share [critical and emerging technologies](#) vital for the country's national security amplifies India's geopolitical importance in the US strategic calculus and the willingness to build a robust tech-centric alignment with India.

India and the US continued to make progress in the defense sector with the 2023 bilateral deal over joint production of GE414-INS6 jet engines, emerging as the flagship initiative of the Biden administration. It is estimated that the deal would lead to roughly 80% [transfer of engine technology](#). However, the deal is likely to remain unrealized during the Biden presidency since it remains in the [negotiation stage](#) more than a year after its announcement. Other important announcements of the Biden administration were the development of India's defense-industrial complex through the India-US Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X); agreement to establish a new [Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul \(MRO\) facility](#) in India for the American C-130 Super Hercules aircrafts for India and other operators; and the [Indian procurement of MQ-9B drones](#) that is expected to upscale India's multi-domain capabilities in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR).

At the regional level, the Biden era saw a sustained push to establish Quad as an important regional grouping and India's leadership role within Quad. The grouping, with six summit-level meetings and eight foreign ministers' meetings metamorphosed in four years into a high-profile leaders' led initiative with [a robust agenda for cooperation](#) in the Indo-Pacific region. The member-states agreed to elevate the Quad to a summit-level initiative in 2021.

Keeping its central purpose of facilitating maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region, the Quad took a major step in May 2022 and set up the [Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness](#) (IPMDA) to “offer near-real-time, integrated, and cost-effective maritime domain awareness information to partners in the region.” Since then, the IPMDA has expanded its mandate to cover the entire Indo-Pacific, including the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and Pacific Island countries. Reinforcing its maritime security objective, the [2024 Quad summit](#) has unveiled three important initiatives: the Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific (MAITRI), a maritime legal dialogue, and a first-ever Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission.

The Biden era saw a fair share of controversies that challenged India-US relations, including at least six important issues with the potential to derail momentum in the bilateral cooperation—the [CAATSA-related sanctions](#) until the [India-specific waiver](#) in 2022, [Indian abstentions](#) in the pro-Ukraine multilateral diplomacy, [Indian imports of Russian oil](#) despite the US sanctions, [the US withdrawal from Afghanistan](#), alleged [Indian extraterritorial operations](#) in Canada and the US, and the [US criticism](#) of human rights situations in India. These issues will continue to challenge the partnership, along with issues such as export controls, tech transfer, and India-specific legislative waivers. To move the relationship forward the next US administration should prioritize two issues in particular—setting up of the semiconductor fabrication plant and joint production of Jet Engine GE414-INS6.

Notwithstanding bipartisan consensus on India's importance in the US Indo-Pacific strategy, Biden's legacy lies in the seriousness and non-transactional approach with which his administration pushed India-US partnership. Regardless of who is in the White House in from January 2025, the real challenge for the governments in the two countries will be to maintain the same heightened level of interest, trust, and political will that defined India-US partnership of the Biden era. It is one thing to spell out the intent and it is another to implement it.

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