



# **America Votes 2024: The Transatlantic Impact**

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## **A Hope for Continuity**

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# A Hope for Continuity

By Garima Mohan | October 23, 2024

*The United States recognizes India as a key geopolitical partner. New Delhi does not want that to change.*

India's importance to the United States is an issue that enjoys bipartisan consensus in Washington, one that was forged over the last two decades under Republican- and Democrat-led administrations, including Donald Trump's and Joe Biden's. This leaves New Delhi less worried about the US presidential election outcome than European capitals are. Regardless of the winner, India is looking for more continuity than change, particularly on policy toward China and the Indo-Pacific.

A key factor driving US-India strategic convergence in recent years has been similar assessments of China and the challenges the country's rise presents. Europe may have differences with the US approach to competition with China, but India is broadly aligned with it. Given Beijing's expanding influence and military footprint in the Indo-Pacific, the United States and India also have similar views of the dynamics there. This has allowed the Quad (which also brings in Australia and Japan) to emerge as one of the most important regional diplomatic forums. Moreover, for Washington, New Delhi plays an important role as a "geopolitical counterbalance, economic alternative, a more trusted technology partner, and a democratic contrast to China".

As a result, even though India is not an alliance partner of the United States, the two coordinate on regional security. They have concluded logistics agreements, enjoy greater interoperability and information sharing between their armed forces, and conduct regular joint military exercises, including with other partners such as Australia and Japan under Malabar, an annual naval exercise that started as a bilateral drill and evolved into a key multilateral event. In addition, a US-India defense trade and technology partnership has expanded immensely over the years and includes defense industrial collaboration, co-production, and co-development. ICET, a strategic partnership on critical and emerging technologies, has led to deepening strategic cooperation in space, artificial intelligence, quantum, biotech, and clean energy. Advanced defense innovation through the India-US Defense Accelerator Ecosystem focuses on promoting collaboration among defense startups. The United States is a partner in India's semiconductor mission, and American companies are looking at investing in India's semiconductor sector.

The United States and India also have 61 formal dialogue mechanisms that bring together their heads of state, foreign ministers, defense ministers, national security advisers, among others. The Quad provides yet another platform for coordination.

Given this robust partnership, India will look for a similar level of interest from the new US administration, especially on its approach to China. Another bipartisan consensus sees Beijing as a threat to the United States, but the policy approaches of a Trump versus Harris administration could differ significantly, particularly on the importance of working with allies and partners.

The Biden administration has had a carefully calibrated approach to China, one based on competition that does not devolve into confrontation. This "invest, align, compete" strategy is likely to continue under a Kamala Harris administration. India, however, would still seek signs that it has an important place in the administration's overall strategy, as it does now with Biden in the White House. New Delhi will also want the Quad to maintain its key role in coordination on Indo-Pacific issues. Other concerns will include any Harris administration focus on democratic norms and domestic developments in India, and on the US accusation that an Indian government employee was involved in a plot to assassinate an American citizen

Regarding foreign policy, India's relationship with Russia raises eyebrows in Washington and could also emerge as a stumbling block in bilateral ties. Lastly, with conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, New Delhi will look at a Harris administration's ability to balance commitments there with its interests in the Indo-Pacific.

A Trump administration will likely move away from Ukraine and focus more on the Indo-Pacific. New Delhi's relationship with Russia will not matter as much to the reelected president. However, lack of stability and predictability will be a major issue for India, as it will be for all US partners. Trump's approach to working with allies is transactional, and he often considers them to be "a burden" for the United States. This will matter to New Delhi since it is part of a network of allies and partners working with Washington in the Indo-Pacific, particularly through the Quad. The former president's [call for Taiwan to pay the United States for its defense](#), the possibility of his administration's cutting a deal with China that would have implications for the Indo-Pacific or, conversely, that he will ratchet up the rhetoric with Beijing to the point of confrontation, all unsettle New Delhi. Trump's talk of imposing a 20% tariff on all US imports has the same effect, given that goods imported from India were up to [\\$85.5 billion in 2022](#). US restrictions on visas for highly skilled workers strained ties during Trump's first term. The issue will likely resurface if he returns to the White House.

Regardless of who wins the elections, India will seek to minimize any frictions and find a way to work with the new administration. But New Delhi will also hedge its bets. It will recalibrate its ties with other partners, especially those in Europe, based on the US election result and the changes it brings.

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### **About the Author**

**Garima Mohan** is a Brussels-based senior fellow in the Indo-Pacific program, leading the team's work on India and the India Trilateral Forum. Her research focuses on Europe-India ties, EU foreign policy in Asia, and security in the Indo-Pacific. Prior to joining GMF, she was the acting team leader and coordinator for the EU's Asia-Pacific Research and Advice Network, which supports EU policymakers on issues concerning the Asia-Pacific. She also led the Global Order program at the Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin.

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