

Indian-American relations under the Biden administration: A Vision for the Future

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Abstract:

Growing concern about Chinese aggression in both New Delhi and Washington has led the US military establishment to seek tactical convergence in order to include India as a counterbalance to China. The United States and India, on the other hand, are dealing with difficult economic recovery at home after being destroyed by the Covid-19 global pandemic, and protectionist views are emerging, potentially compromising the relationship's promise. A true and extensive cooperation with India may underlie US policy throughout Asia and advance US foreign interests over the next decades, as Joe Biden does have the chance to deepen and strengthen the relationship after his victory in the US presidential election. According to this study, the Biden administration can implement a "natural relationship" [1] as described by previous presidents.

Keywords: Natural collaboration, bilateral cooperation, Biden administration, Covid-19 global pandemic

Introduction

Prime Minister AB Vajpayee referred to the United States and India as "natural allies" in a speech to the Asia Society in New York City in September 1998[2]. His comment, as well as the timing of it, were both contentious. It was clear to the prime minister that convergence between the United States and India was unavoidable for institutional and structural reasons [3]. The first would have been strategic, focusing on China's rise; the second would have been economic, focusing on India's prosperity; and the third would have been centered on shared democratic principles. Officials in the United States were also open to these possibilities at the time. In March 2000, Bill Clinton made his first trip to India as president of the United States since Jimmy Carter's visit [4]. Vajpayee had hoped for a resetting of bilateral cooperation after his visit, and that is exactly what happened. United States-India ties have never been better 20 years later. As per India's Ministry of Commerce, bilateral trade in products or services climbed to \$149 billion by 2020 versus \$ 16 billion in 1999, while India remained the US' ninth-biggest trading nation & US remained India's biggest trading partner. The country's huge Indian American community contributes to India as well as the US strong cultural links. For instance, the quantity of Indian people studying in the U. S. has reached new highs of 202,000, up over 81,000 during 2008[5]. Notwithstanding the country's significant divisions, both main political parties in the US strive for improved relations with India.

The Seeds of a Natural Collaboration

Today, under the presidency of Joseph R. Biden Jr., the friendship is being put to the test. To avoid another India-Pakistan conflict, the Biden administration should put pressure on Islamabad in bilateral and multilateral negotiations to take tougher measures against terrorists crossing the border into India. Biden's administration may look into including India in a small group of friendly countries that already includes Iran and Central Asian states like Afghanistan's government and the Taliban. The Biden administration might utilize the withdrawal of American soldiers to encourage India to enhance its rebuilding and continued development in Afghanistan, including its military participation via security officers training and the supply of further defense aid. While Pakistan may resist, the US needs additional friends dedicated to maintaining Afghanistan's stability. On the presidential campaign, Biden referred to India like a "natural partner," and he would be tasked with improving what is already a successful relationship at the moment of new international dynamics & difficulties [6]. New Delhi and Washington's increasingly similar views on Beijing would underpin a strong security relationship. Both economies have been devastated by the corona virus pandemic, which has fueled economic nationalism, which could thwart more business collaboration and the ability of the two countries to compete with China. Furthermore, further deterioration of democratic principles in India might present serious problems for the US.

This paper tries to explain Indian-American relationships under Biden administration: A Vision for the Future and gives a strategy for how the Biden administration may significantly develop the relationship, cultivating what Vajpayee considered "natural" well over 20 years ago as well as Biden now.

To take US-India relations towards the next stage, a Biden administration would have to do the following.

- Broaden the relationship's scope to include health, climate and digital collaboration.
- Begin a new chapter with a constructive business strategy that promotes change and transparency.
- In the midst of China's ascent, reaffirm US leadership and regional dialogue.
- Place a premium on common values as the cornerstone of the connection.

Required Future Vision for The Biden Administration

For the Biden administration, this means shifting to a more open-minded approach to cooperation, reviving energy and health partnerships to tackle both Covid-19 & changing climate, as well as making strategic interaction with India, are all priorities.

i. Participate and re-embrace the US-India Bilateral Discussion.

Previous administrations have expended significant political capital and effort on India, even at the highest levels of government, and a President Biden would be prudent to do the same. Being vice president, he has already developed relationships with Prime Minister Modi. President Biden should travel to India in 2022 and speak with Prime Minister Modi in global forums whenever possible, despite travel being extremely difficult in recent times because of Covid-19. In the meanwhile, unlike President Trump, the government should expedite early consultations and discussions now at ministerial as well as working levels, and all important agency posts connected to India. The Biden government may broaden the scope of the relationship & emphasize areas of the relationship which have been ignored over the last four years by resuming a larger US-India Comprehensive Discussion with the 2+2 as a core component.

ii. Begin Covid-19–related medical collaboration.

Even as the two countries with the greatest number of corona virus illnesses, the United States and India have a vested interest in controlling the pandemic and creating and disseminating a safe and effective vaccine. Both nations are major health-related industrial hubs with operations all over the world. A medical trade agreement between India and the United States is critical in combating this pandemic on a local and global scale [7]. The Biden administration must establish a conversation track to address India on Covid-19 as soon as possible. The conversation could also be tasked to rapidly producing actionable advice to support the health workforce in both countries, like collectively relieving restrictions on trade which may influence the health workforce and making a visa waiver for Indian people who could help fight the pandemic with in U.S.

iii. Reinvigorate US-India environmental & energy collaboration

The Obama-Biden regime successfully persuaded the Modi government to assume more responsibilities in global climate discussions in 2015 & 2016. Under part of Paris Agreement, India presented an aggressive list of NDCs and approved it. Nevertheless, considering the Trump administration's aversion to climate policy, bilateral collaboration on environment and alternative resources has dwindled in the last 4 years. Accordingly, India is on the right path toward meeting the goals set out in the Paris Climate Agreement, which include reducing emissions by 33 percent to 35 percent of the country's GDP by 2030 compared to 2005 levels and generating 40 percent of its electricity using sources other than fossil fuels [8]. In a joint declaration with French President, Macron last year, Modi said that India is prepared to "raise its climate duties, or nationally determined contributions (NDCs)" [9]. Since then, the increasing Covid-19 pandemic has struck havoc on India's still severely fossilized economy. As a consequence, the Biden administration may encourage India to improve its NDCs, while reaffirming the US commitment to the Paris Agreement as well as the Montreal Protocol. As a result, more bilateral energy cooperation is needed, with an emphasis on increasing India's renewable energy investments and capacity, and aiding India's transition to a greener economy. [10].

iv. Abandon the Trump government's immigration plans and step on from the trade conflict.

The Indian American community became an irritant in the relations as a result of the Trump administration's aim to limit legal immigration. Indian immigration to the US has a direct impact on commerce and adds value towards both economies. As a result, the Biden administration should cancel Trump's executive orders reducing H1-B & L-1 visas. If indeed the government is thinking about worker visas, it could consider raising the number of visas available and eliminating the country-based barrier. Furthermore, as stated during the campaign, it should produce comprehensive immigration reform legislation that maintains the US open to job creators while offering a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants. The Indian government, the Indo-American community, and American corporations would all gain from such a program [11]. Likewise; the US may use the opportunity to terminate the two-year trade conflict. The Biden government must approach India as soon as possible to overcome bilateral economic difficulties. In order to restart discussions, the US may defer steel & aluminum tariffs as well as convince

v. Use the power of example to promote human rights and democracy.

To address "strengthening democracy at home and abroad," Biden contacted Prime Minister Modi on November 17, 2020. His administration should keep working to further the shared democratic goals of the two countries. However, the process must get under way at home. The Biden administration would indeed be wise to halt the Muslim immigration ban & family separations at US border. If the

United States refuses to acknowledge and accept its shortcomings, the rest of the world will see it as a meaningless gesture. In dealing with any partner, including India, the Biden administration will have to exercise caution. It was only at the worker level that the Trump administration zoomed in on this long-standing practice, not at the ministerial level. In the meanwhile, Washington can't risk alienating New Delhi, which sees democracy from a different angle than Washington does. These debates can only be described as pleasant ones amongst people who share a same goal of seeing India prosper and remain peaceful. The Global Summit for Democracy, which takes place every year, should take these concerns into account [13].

Conclusion

Senator Joe Biden declared in 2006, "My ambition is that, US and India would be the closest countries in the world". Though this ambition has yet to come true, as president, Joe Biden does have the opportunity to make it a reality during the next 4 years. One of his problems would be that the connection between the United States and India is stronger than it ever has been. Even if there are dramatic changes in Indian politics, Modi's term in office will span the bulk of Joe Biden's first. This provides the Biden government with a unique opportunity to foster a natural collaboration.

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