

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

US-INDIA RELATIONS

WEATHERING THE CRISIS

AKHIL RAMESH, PACIFIC FORUM
MICHAEL RUBIN, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

* THIS CHAPTER WAS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH A GRANT FROM THE HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION.

For the US-India bilateral relationship, the first four months of 2024 was a repeat of the quarters of the last three years. Differences in attitudes toward Cold-War era partnerships surfaced and upset the calm in bilateral relations. Still, there were significant strides in the economic and trade front. The dispute over the killing in Canada of a Khalistan separatist designated a terrorist by India marred the security partnership. Still, Washington continued diplomatically to support India vis-à-vis China's provocations such as [bestowing](#) Chinese names on Indian towns. Visits by top American military brass underscored the growing security cooperation between the two democracies. The nature of electoral democracy, though, created some diplomatic tension. While heated rhetoric and polemical campaign statements in India provided fodder for the Western press to question the supposed "values-based" partnership with India, President Joe Biden's suggestion that Japan and India were as xenophobic and anti-immigrant as Russia and China angered many in India.

This article is extracted from Comparative Connections: A Triannual E-Journal of Bilateral Relations in the Indo-Pacific, Vol. 26, No. 1, May 2024. Preferred citation: Akhil Ramesh and Michael Rubin, "US-India Relations: Weathering the Crisis," Comparative Connections, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp xx-xx.

These episodes were minor squalls compared to the hurricanes the bilateral relationship has endured over the last 50 or 60 years. While elections and security divergences made headlines, the relationship continued to build on pillars of trade and technology cooperation.

Election Summer Gets Scorching

In the time between the arrest of opposition leader and leader of the Aam Aadmi Party, Arvind Kejriwal in New Delhi and his release a month later, the parties in the opposition coalition, also known as the INDI alliance, used the arrest and other cases of opposition party leaders arrested over corruption and other charges by the enforcement directorate to stir up the electorate's fear and concern over supposed rising authoritarian rule. Some leaders, such as members of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) — typically abbreviated CPI(M)—went as far as to raise concerns that a third term for the BJP-led government at the center would lead to amendments to the constitution such as removing the words “socialist” and “secular”. The other opposition parties added to the hyperbole, with the usual rhetoric and alarms of an impending genocide, turn to fascism and a total erosion of India's supposed secular values. The BJP's election campaigning was on many instances worthy of such harsh criticism.



Figure 1 Supporters of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hold a cutout of their leader, the prime minister, Narendra Modi. Photo: Noah Seelam/AFP/Getty Images

While the Indian prime minister campaigned on supposedly fulfilling his 2014 and 2019 elections promises, such as welfare schemes, infrastructure and building of the Ram Temple, he also played into the fears of the electorate using rhetoric and baseless accusations such as the opposition vying for their land and property

through what he called as “redistribution policies”

Among them was his insinuation that the INDI alliance—of which the communist parties are members—if in power would give away the reservations or quotas (India's affirmative action policies) to the Muslim minority.

Washington encourages and applauds the democratic exercise of going to the polls in India while raising concerns on the status of minorities through the reports it commissions annually, such as the Report on International Religious Freedom.

While a return of a majority-BJP government at the center could potentially lead to five more years of stable governance and macroeconomic outlook, the religious polarization and India's turn to a more outwardly Hindu-nationalist nation cannot be dismissed. This would be a perennial bone of contention for Washington, particularly as it prioritizes value-based partnerships over interest-based ones. That said, a government formed by the INDI alliance will not necessarily bode well for the US-India bilateral partnership either. With several regional parties subscribing to socialist and even Marxist ideals, the liberalization and reforms needed for a better business environment for American enterprises may not be in the cards—turning the clock back to 2014 or, worse, 1990—an era prior to India's opening to the world with liberalization recommended by the International Monetary Fund. The leader of the opposition, Rahul Gandhi, has advocated for more [welfare schemes](#) while a few of his partners in the INDI alliance have advocated for radical measures such as [giving up](#) India's nuclear program to abandoning ties with Israel to increasing government job guarantees. Such hyperbole and exaggerations kept newsrooms buzzing with more to report on and TV debates were not short of sparring contests between spokespersons of different political parties and analysts. Polls unanimously predict a third term for the Modi government coming back to power with an absolute majority. However, analysts are of the view that the government's delayed response to the civil strife in Manipur could cost them the northeastern state and seats in a few other states such as the western state of Maharashtra and southern state of Karnataka. In an election year, every topic becomes a highly political discussion, so the topic of American and other foreign investments into India's critical and emerging

technology manufacturing sectors turned into a political debate. In the southern states of both Tamil Nadu and [Telangana](#), leaders [accused](#) the Modi government of diverting foreign investments in semiconductor manufacturing to states to the prime minister’s home state of Gujarat.



Figure 2 In Coimbatore, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was seen presenting party candidates to the public, alongside Chief Minister MK Stalin. Photo: DTNEXT Bureau

On balance, the first four months were marked by the usual media trials of India’s fitness as a partner and the attempts to portray India as a non-democratic nation. The election year made it ever more polemical, with Indian politicians making it easy through their polarizing rhetoric for India skeptics to paint the nation in broad strokes.

Interestingly, the Indian External Affairs Minister Subramanyam Jaishankar weighed in on Western media. Adding to the election heat, he [quipped](#), “I get a lot of these noises from the Western press and if they criticize our democracy, it’s not because they lack information. It is because they think they are also political players in our election.”

Modi is No MBS

Crises are an important check to the statements of diplomats who always spin relationships to see the positive. When the unexpected derails carefully choreographed diplomacy, the resulting trial by fire can reflect a relationship’s true endurance. So, it was with US-India ties in the final months of 2023. The crisis began when, on Sept. 18, 2023, Canadian Premier Justin Trudeau accused Indian intelligence of assassinating a Sikh militant in Canada. When

the Indian government pushed back and denied any involvement in the murder, Trudeau said the intelligence on Indian complicity originated with the United States that then shared it with the “Five Eyes” intelligence-sharing partnership. US Ambassador to Canada David L. Cohen confirmed that the US intelligence community provided information after the murder, although US officials have not said Trudeau’s conclusions comport to those of the United States. The accusations continue to overshadow all aspects of India-Canada relationships.

Importantly, however, the same is not true with US-India ties. While Washington’s credence to Canada’s investigation peevs New Delhi, a similar US-India incident regarding a supposed murder plot against a Khalistan separatist did not derail the relationship.

In November 2023, a second-generation Pakistan-American reporter with the Intercept, [citing](#) sources from the Pakistani intelligence services, the ISI was among the first to write about the Indian government’s alleged overreach through cross-border assassinations. Subsequently, the Financial Times [reported](#) that US law enforcement had “thwarted” a similar plot to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a naturalized US citizen whom India designated a terrorist, on US soil.¹ While India denies culpability in any plot against Pannun, it [cooperates](#) with US intelligence and law enforcement on the investigation.² In April 2024, US intelligence officials leaked details of that investigation to the Washington Post. The resulting article, citing unidentified US and former Indian intelligence officers, identified Vikram Yadav, an officer in India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) as a lynchpin of the plot. He allegedly declared the elimination of Pannun to be a “priority now.”



Figure 3 In 2020, India officially labeled Gurpatwant Singh Pannun as a terrorist. Photo: Getty Images

The *Washington Post* [reported](#) that the CIA, FBI, and other agencies that mapped “potential” links between the assassination plot and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s inner circle and supposedly found both RAW chief Samant Goel and perhaps National Security Adviser Ajit Doval may have been aware of the operation. Whatever the truth of the allegation—and the description of the investigation was filled with conditionals rather than firm declarations—New Delhi is right to be upset about both the leak, the patchwork narrative upon which US allegations rest, and the presence and activity on US soil of those deemed terrorists by the Indian government. Washington, meanwhile, could rightly be angry if RAW plotted an assassination on US soil against a US citizen.

To date, though, the US government has only filed charges against Nikhil Gupta, an accused drug and weapons trafficker allegedly tasked with hiring a hitman. Public evidence, however, is not conclusive given the organized criminal activity that surrounds much Khalistan separatist activity in both California and, for that matter, Canada. While the facts of the case will emerge with time, the case represents more an irritant rather than foundational crisis in ties. This suggests US-India ties are strong enough that they can weather not only storms but hurricanes. Cynics might say rightly that fear of People’s Republic of China’s militarism and expansionism motivates both Washington and New Delhi to overcome bilateral grievances, but the desire for relations is broader. Both the United States and India base bilateral ties today as much on a desire for partnership to benefit both countries’ economy than simply fear of a mutual enemy. Relations are truly symbiotic.

While media persons and some experts were quick to add India to the group of nations associated with global repression such as communist and authoritarian states of China, Iran and Russia, the open channels for communication among the highest levels of security and intelligence in the US and India coupled with India’s commitment to investigate the alleged crime highlight India’s commitment to the rule of law. Furthermore, as the Indian minister quipped, “even in the worst of the weather conditions, a larger share of the population participates in the democratic exercise of voting than in the best of conditions in the Western world.” The Indian minister

speaking for his administration is not a new phenomenon.

However, an unusual [advocate](#) for the Modi administration was JP Morgan Chase Chief Executive Officer Jamie Dimon. Speaking at the Economic Club of New York, Dimon said, “Modi had done an unbelievable job,.. I know the liberal press here beat the hell out of him...he has taken 400 million people out of poverty and really, we are lecturing him on how to do things?” They’ve opened bank accounts for 700 million people...this one is tough” This comes at the backdrop of JP Morgan including Indian bonds in its emerging market bond index.

Exercises Multiply as Security Relations Take-Off

The United States-India security partnership continued to development in the first four months of the year. On February 21, 2024, the US Department of Defense and India’s Ministry of Defense inaugurated their second India-US Defense Acceleration Ecosystem ([INDUS-X](#)) Summit in New Delhi.³ The attendance of Adm. John C. Aquilino, commander of US Pacific Command, highlighted the importance the Pentagon places on military industrial cooperation with India. Indian Defense Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramane’s participation likewise demonstrated high-level Indian buy-in for the summit’s goals. The summit focused on ways to manufacture jointly and enhance advanced military capabilities and platforms, as well as create resilient supply chains.

The summit addressed practicalities and demonstrated forward momentum on earlier planning documents. Substance trumped showmanship. During the inaugural INDUS-X summit in June 2023 that coincided with Modi’s state visit to the United States, for example, Indian and American officials signed Memorandum of Understanding between General Electric and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to co-produce GE-414 fight jet engines. In November 2023, the United States [granted](#) the necessary security waivers to allow the manufacture of the engines that the Indian military will incorporate in the Tejas MK-2 and the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft MK-1.⁴ The [next milestone](#) for that project will be a formal contract.⁵ In addition, American and Indian officials continue negotiations for 31 MQ-9B drones that will include both assembly and maintenance, repair, and operations work in

India. On February 1, 2024, the State Department provided preliminary approval for the nearly \$4 billion sale.



Figure 4 The United States Coast Guard (USCG) Ship Bertholf arrived at Port Blair for the joint exercise 'Sea Defenders-2024' with the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), slated to occur on March 9–10. Photo: ANI.

The United States and India also continue to accelerate interoperability through a series of exercises. In February 2024, the US Navy [participated](#) for only the second time in India's flagship multilateral "Milan" naval exercise. The following month, the Indian and US Coast Guards exercised in "Sea Defenders-2024" off the Andaman Islands in the central Indian Ocean on issues relating to pollution and oil spill response, firefighting, and response to drone attacks on commercial shipping.

On March 18, 2024, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and his Indian Counterpart Rajnath Singh [spoke](#) by telephone to discuss the "Major Defense Partnership" the two countries established. Their call coincided with the start of [Exercise Tiger TRIUMPH 2024](#), a two-week bilateral "Tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Amphibious Exercise" first held in 2019 and designed to bolster interoperability. This year's third iteration was the most extensive and included everything from ship boarding drills to sports competitions to helicopter operations, landing of troops and establishment of a medical camp.

High-level discussions also continued outside formal exercises. On April 11, 2024, US Army Pacific Headquarters in Hawaii hosted a senior Indian delegation led by Lt. General TK Aich, the deputy chief of the Army Staff for Strategy, to [discuss cooperation](#) between the two militaries. Quite simply, American and Indian military leaders are actively socializing to break down

boundaries and decades of distance-creating formality.

Outside of exercises, India increasingly asserts itself on the world stage to defend the liberal order. While US and Indian diplomatic posture vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran differs, India joined international operations in the Red Sea to counter threats to freedom of navigation by Iran-backed Houthi militiamen in Yemen. India demonstrates a real ability to project force in real-world rather than choreographed exercise conditions.

Washington for its part, has more outwardly supported India in its border disputes with the PRC. In early April, the US strongly opposed China's attempts to rename 30 locations inside India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh. China's renaming effort was its fourth attempt at laying claims to Indian territory. Since the Trump era, Washington has outwardly supported New Delhi in its border disputes with China. The security US-India bilateral relationship rests on the shared concerns over a belligerent PRC in conventional and non-conventional security domains.

Trade and Technology: Pillars Holding Up the Partnership

The US-India security partnership extends beyond more traditional security operations to economic cooperation. In March 2024, Richard Verma, an Obama-era ambassador to India who today is the deputy secretary of State for Management and Resources, issued a "[Dipnote](#)" on the US-India partnership. After discussing security cooperation and democracy, he turned to the economy. "Our work on new and emerging technologies will take on even more promise [over coming years]. New and emerging technologies offer tremendous opportunities for economic growth and development. Statistics and indicators suggest Verma's declaration to be valid rather than merely aspirational. In 2023, for example, the US Embassy in New Delhi and its associated consulates issued more than 1 million visas. More than a quarter million Indian students now study in US universities. The State Department recognizes the importance of the Indian economy. On Feb. 26, 2024, for example, the US Consul in Mumbai Mike Hankey [inaugurated](#) a Cybersecurity Center of Excellence in Pune.



Figure 5 Deputy Secretary Verma meets with Indian Defense Secretary Giridhar Aramane in New Delhi, India. Photo: U.S. Department of State.

Economic relations do not simply rely on government officials. As India closes in on becoming the world's [third-largest economy](#), commercial relations are taking on a life of their own. Increasing numbers of US businesses are opening in India. More importantly, India increasingly captures the interest of both American businesses fleeing China or simply those seeking a lucrative market. Complementing India's domestic economic ambitions and policies for indigenous manufacturing, as previous *Comparative Connections* chapters have noted, several American companies have shifted a part of their production away from China and into India or have made greenfield investments in the nation. These investments not only position India as a viable supply chain alternative to China but acknowledge the growing potential of India's urban middle class and favorable demography. Earlier in the year, Apple announced that 14% of its iPhones were not made in India and it plans to move 25% of global iPhone production to India.

Furthermore, American companies are beginning to invest in India in advanced and critical technologies such as semiconductors. On the backs of the CHIPS Act, several American and foreign companies had revived manufacturing in the US. However, certain nodes of the value chain remain commercially unviable to onshore. Those nodes such as advanced testing and packaging, also known as ATP, particularly for larger chips have found homes in emerging markets such as India, Mexico among others. The Idaho-based chipmaker, Micron could be the first company to roll out the chips in 2025. In a similar complementary dynamic, the three Indian plants that were announced earlier in the year, in the western state of Gujarat and northeastern state of Assam, will not only support India's domestic

demand for chips but plug into global supply chains. TATA Electronics of TATA Group is set to supply Tesla's automobiles with packaged chips.

While the US and India find synergies in their industrial policies, once again, Cold-War era relations hamper true economic and trade progress in the form of sanctions.

The US Department of Treasury sanctioned three Indian companies, supporting Sahara Thunder— Zen Shipping, Port India Private Limited, and Sea Art Ship Management (OPC) Private Limited. for facilitating illicit trade of unmanned UAVs to the Iranian military. Similarly, Indian microelectronics maker Si2 was sanctioned by the EU for allegedly supplying chips originating in the US to the Russian military.

Washington [continues to ignore](#) Indian purchase of discounted Russian oil, potentially putting India at risk of sanctioning under Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). That the United States has not enforces CAATSA on India reflects a diplomatic rather than technical decision, but the threats still loom, especially as Modi, like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, represents a lightning rod on Capitol Hill.

Economic Statecraft as Deterrence

The Modi government has taken a concerted approach to increasing domestic manufacturing, particularly in sectors that are highly dependent on imports. Sectors vital to national security, such as defense, have witnessed a substantial increase in domestic manufacturing. From simple assembly of machine guns to manufacturing of drones and ballistic missiles, India's defense manufacturing has grown exponentially over the last decade or so. While still far behind exporters such as the US, UK, and Russia, India is steadily growing its export base with nations such as Armenia, Philippines and Vietnam. India's recent exports of supersonic ballistic missiles, Brahmos to the Philippines is a case in point. The Indian Airforce delivered first tranche of missiles to the Philippines in April. These ballistic missiles enhance deterrence measures in South China Sea and the broader Indo-Pacific region by complementing the new "Squad" grouping of Philippines, Japan, Australia and the United States. Interestingly, India's economic initiatives are adding to the conventional security deterrence efforts. The

Indian edible oil-to-ports conglomerate, Adani Group, announced investment plans for the development of a port in Baatan in Luzon Island in the Philippines.

A recurring criticism of the Quad grouping was its limited scope to delivery of public goods. While a more conventional security grouping of the Squad may fill the void in the form of a multilateral security mechanism in the Indo-Pacific, New Delhi's bilateral defense and geo-economic projects can add the much-needed assistance to smaller nations in the Indo-Pacific.

This port project is not an isolated infrastructure project development, neither for Adani nor for India. The group has been at the forefront of India's geo-strategic port and infrastructure development, from Sri Lanka and Myanmar to more recently in Greece. The US, India and Europe's involvement in the IMEC initiative holds much promise, not only for increased trade but also serving as an alternative to the axis of disruptive powers such as Iran, China, Qatar and Turkey.

As previous *Comparative Connections* chapters have noted, Cold-War era differences on separatist groups and nations such as Pakistan will continue to be a thorn in the relationship. That said, the thorn will neither shape nor define the partnership. The US-India partnership has steadily grown and expanded to become a dynamic partnership not limited to any one sphere. From deep sea-to-space, America and India are working together to solve regional and global challenges.

Conclusion

From the 1971 crisis in the Bay of Bengal to the nuclear test crisis and the subsequent sanctions in the late 90s, US-India relations have weathered severe hurricanes. A few thunderstorms are not going to burst the dikes. As the first *Comparative Connections* chapter on US-India relations in early 2022 noted, the relationship has significant potential on the economic and technological front. Even the security cooperation is not limited. From military exercises in the Himalayas to maritime exercises in Hawaii, the defense and security relationship has steadily expanded. But will the two paper over all aspects of their previous histories for a smooth ride on the diplomatic train? Probably not.

CHRONOLOGY OF US-INDIA RELATIONS

JANUARY-APRIL 2024

Jan. 3, 2024: India's Supreme Court states that it will not intervene in the case of an Indian man accused of conspiring to kill a Sikh separatist on US soil.

Jan. 12, 2024: 14th Ministerial-level meeting of the India-US Trade Policy Forum [commences](#). The Ministers took stock of the progress made in addressing concerns impacting the bilateral trade relationship since the 13th TPF in January 2023. This was highlighted by the historic settlement of all seven longstanding trade disputes at the World Trade Organization (WTO) between the two countries. Key areas of discussion were: critical minerals, supply chains, and trade in high-tech products.

Jan. 25, 2024: Republic of India [deposits](#) an instrument of ratification of Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) for Prosperity Agreement Relating to Supply Chain Resilience.

Jan. 26-31, 2024: Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu [travels](#) to India and Maldives. While in India, Lu leads a US delegation's participation at the India-US Forum in New Delhi and engages with Indian government officials and members of the private sector, academia, and media to discuss ways to enhance opportunities for partnership between the United States and India.

Jan. 31, 2024: US Department of Commerce announces that the IPEF Agreement Relating to Supply Chain Resilience will enter into force from today. Ratification occurs after five IPEF partners, including India, deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, or approval with the Depositary.

Feb. 2, 2024: US approves a \$4 billion deal for drone manufacturing for India.

Feb. 2, 2024: Indian Amb. Sripriya Ranganathan [meets](#) Assistant Secretary Loyce Pace on further strengthening India-US health cooperation.

Feb. 16, 2024: Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in Munich, Germany, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. Blinken and Jaishankar discussed the need to ensure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. Blinken highlighted that the respective US and Indian approaches to maritime security in the Red Sea are

mutually reinforcing and play important roles in safeguarding economic stability in the region. They also discussed work to ensure lasting peace and security in the Middle East.

Feb. 17, 2024: Secretary Blinken participated in Munich Security Conference Public Forum on Multilateralism with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar.

Feb. 19-21, 2024: Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Richard Verma [meets](#) senior Indian officials in New Delhi to advance the US-Indian global strategic partnership. Meetings with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Defense Secretary Giridhar Aramane, and Deputy National Security Advisor Vikram Misri explored opportunities to strengthen US-India cooperation and people-to-people ties to ensure a free, open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

Feb. 19-27, 2024: Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Rena Bitter [travels](#) to Chennai, Mumbai, New Delhi, and Doha. She visits facilities in Chennai and Mumbai and led a US delegation in a bilateral consular dialogue with counterparts in New Delhi. Her travel aims to bolster people-to-people and economic ties.

March 2, 2024: India Dialogue at Stanford University [commences](#), with Amb. Sripriya Ranganathan speaking about the strong trajectory of the US-India relationship, especially in commerce, defense, science & tech, education, healthcare, and people-to-people ties.

March 5, 2024: United States and India [hold](#) 20th meeting of the US-India Counter Terrorism Joint Working Group and 6th Designations Dialogue in Washington, DC. They emphasized the value and durability of the US-India comprehensive global and strategic partnership and renewed commitments to countering terrorism and promoting regional security as an integral part of broader bilateral cooperation.

March 14, 2024: In a press statement, President Biden calls the US-India relationship "the defining partnership of the 21st century," while Prime Minister Modi says the countries' ties are "shaping lives, dreams, and destinies."

March 15, 2024: India [rejects](#) US concern over the implementation of a religion-based citizenship law as “misplaced, misinformed, and unwarranted.” New Delhi’s strong response follows the US State Department saying it will “closely monitor” the implementation of the religion-based law.

March 15, 2024: Beijing [lodges](#) a diplomatic protest with New Delhi after Prime Minister Modi officially inaugurated a tunnel built in territories along the two countries’ contested Himalayan border. Beijing’s “solemn remarks” were given weeks ahead of India’s general elections.

March 26, 2024: World’s longest twin-lane tunnel officially [opens](#), resulting in a heated exchange of remarks between Beijing and New Delhi. Both countries claim the Arunachal Pradesh region where it was built.

March 27, 2024: India strongly [rejects](#) remarks made by the United States and Germany on the arrest of key opposition leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal a month before its national election.

April 1, 2024: US State Department [welcomes](#) space sector leaders from India for an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) exchange focused on commercial space engagement and collaboration to deepen US-India ties.

April 3, 2024: US Army Pacific Command, US Pacific Fleet, and the Indian Navy [conduct](#) a simulated beach landing during a Joint Force amphibious exercise enhancing combined readiness to support humanitarian assistance in the Indo-Pacific region.

April 3, 2024: US [issues](#) a response of “strong opposition” to China’s renaming of geographical areas—mountains, rivers, and residential areas—in the Indian-administered Arunachal Pradesh state. Washington’s statement of opposition comes after Beijing released a list of 30 new names for places along the 1,865-mile disputed Himalayan border between China and India, citing China’s list issuance as a “unilateral attempt” to assert claim over the disputed territory of strategic interest.

April 12, 2024: Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks [meets](#) Indian Foreign Secretary Kwatra to take stock of the defense partnership between the countries. They reaffirmed their commitment to continuing the expansion of the partnership in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

April 25, 2024: US [imposes](#) sanctions on over a dozen companies, which include three from India, for allegedly facilitating illicit trade and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) transfers on behalf of the Iranian military, announced per an official statement by the Department of Treasury.

April 25, 2024: State Department Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) Assistant Secretary Lu, alongside students of the University of California, San Diego’s School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS), [meets](#) with the 21st Century India Center’s network of India stakeholders to discuss ways to promote a sustainable, globally competitive, and inclusive future.

April 25, 2024: Assistant Secretary Lu [hosts](#) an informative session with General Atomics about their magnetic fusion research signaling the continued growth of US-India commercial, academic, and security ties.

April 26, 2024: US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti [reassures](#) Indian students in an official statement that the US is safe to study in, in light of recent protests within universities across the United States. According to the US embassy, the number of Indian students in the US hit an all-time high of 268,923 in the academic year 2022-23.

April 30, 2024: US Authorities [announce](#) that Indian agents may have been involved in the attempted murder of a Sikh separatist in the United States, and the assassination of another in Canada. India’s foreign ministry said *The Washington Post* report made “unwarranted and unsubstantiated imputations on a serious matter,” while New Delhi is investigating the issue.