



Biden, India and comfort in the old normal

GS II: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.



Bottom line: With U.S. Democratic candidate and former Vice-President Joe Biden seizing the lead in the presidential elections that put

him at the cusp of victory, the attention in India turns to what kind of foreign policy changes he will bring to India-U.S. relations. In general, India could still be in a sweet spot if there is political change and a new administration in the U.S.

Positives of Biden:

1. The Obama-Biden administration was first to focus on “Asia-Pacific” in order to build a coalition to counter Chinese inroads in the region. So we may see some continuity in that.
2. It is also likely that Mr Biden will build on the military foundational agreements with India, strengthen military cooperation and push the sale of U.S. military hardware.
3. When it comes to trade, it is unlikely that Mr Biden can dial back many of the measures that Mr Trump has put into motion. But, he may be interested in restoring India's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) status for exporters.
4. On visas, Mr Biden gave Indian-Americans some assurances at a campaign speech last month, and he already has an in-house understanding of the value of Indian immigrants to the U.S., and the importance of India's outsourcing industry to the U.S., through his running mate Kamala Harris.

Friction areas

1. The specific policies of Mr Biden and Mr Trump in the international arena may not differ as much as their political styles and their ideologies do. For example the case of Afghanistan.



2. India's pending review by the U.S. The Commission on International Religious Freedom is where the Democratic Party leadership have been particularly vocal: Jammu-Kashmir, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, communal and caste-based violence, actions against non-governmental organisations and media freedoms.
3. These are areas Mr Trump ignored for the most part, but are areas where Mr Biden once said the U.S. "admired" India the most.
4. In a speech in 2013 during a visit to Mumbai, Mr Biden had said: "We admire the way you've melded ethnicities, faiths and tongues into a single, proud nation; the way entrepreneurship seems almost hard-wired into Indian society, from rickshaw-wallas to web programmers; and maybe most of all, we admire your democracy and the message that your democracy sends to people everywhere in the world."

International outlook

1. Above all, Mr Biden's foreign policy will be watched for just how much he *reverses Mr Trump's pullout from the multilateral world order*, including the World Health Organisation, UNESCO, Human Rights Council, agreements such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris Climate Accord and traditional trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific alliances.
2. He will also be watched for what concrete measures he takes in order to strengthen the rules-based international order and to ensure the countries that flout it the most, including China, Russia, and even the United States are held to account.

Mains:

1. The success of the multilateral world order depends so much on a few powerful countries. Critically discuss.