

# MP-IDSA *Commentary*

## The Future of the India-US Partnership

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May 22, 2025

### **S***ummary*

US President Donald Trump's recent statements have equated India and Pakistan while it is clear that Pakistan is the perpetrator of terrorism and India the victim.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing the Joint Session of the US Congress in June 2016, declared that India had overcome the “hesitations of history”.<sup>1</sup> These long-standing “hesitations” ranged from the US support to Pakistan in the UN Security Council on the Kashmir issue, threats and intimidation in the Bay of Bengal resorted to by the US in 1971 during the India–Pakistan war leading to the independence of Bangladesh, stoppage of supply of nuclear fuel after India’s 1974 Peaceful Nuclear Explosion, wide-ranging sanctions in the aftermath of India’s nuclear tests in May 1998, among others. PM Modi added that “a new symphony” was at play in the India–US bilateral relations.<sup>2</sup>

Comments by US President Donald Trump as also by Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the conflict that erupted between India and Pakistan in the wake of Pakistan-sponsored terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir on 22 April 2025 which led to the death of 26 innocent civilians, 25 of them Hindus, have, however, added complications to the bilateral ties. On 10 May 2025, Trump on the Truth Social platform announced that “After a long night of talks mediated by the United States ... India and Pakistan have agreed to a FULL AND IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE”.<sup>3</sup>

Marco Rubio followed the lead of his President and wrote on X the same day:

Over the past 48 hours, @VP Vance and I have engaged with senior Indian and Pakistani officials, including Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Shehbaz Sharif, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir, and National Security Advisors Ajit Doval and Asim Malik. I am pleased to announce the Governments of India and Pakistan have agreed to an immediate ceasefire and to start talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site.<sup>4</sup>

Trump later appreciated the

strong and unwaveringly powerful leadership of India and Pakistan for having the strength, wisdom and fortitude to fully know and understand that it was time to stop the current aggression that could have led to the death and destruction of so many, and so much. ... I am proud that the USA was able to help you arrive at this historic and heroic decision. While not even discussed, I am going to increase trade substantially with both of these great nations. Additionally, I will work with both of you to see if

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<sup>1</sup> Shubhajit Roy, “[Shedding ‘Hesitations of History’, PM Modi Points to Future in His Address to US Congress](#)”, *Indian Express*, 9 June 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “[Donald Trump Says India and Pakistan Agree to ‘Full and Immediate Ceasefire’](#)”, *Hindustan Times*, 10 May 2025.

<sup>4</sup> “[Over The Past 48 Hours, @VP Vance And I Have Engaged with Senior Indian and Pakistani Officials](#)”, X (formerly Twitter), 10 May 2025.

after a thousand years, a solution can be arrived at concerning Kashmir.  
God Bless the leadership of India and Pakistan on a job well done.<sup>5</sup>

On his first overseas visit after assuming office to Saudi Arabia, Trump stated that he had “successfully brokered a historic ceasefire to stop the escalating violence between India and Pakistan, and I used trade to a large extent to do it”.<sup>6</sup> Trump singled out Marco Rubio for leading US efforts in the India–Pakistan situation. On 14 May, in an interview to *Fox News*, Trump again stated that he brokered the ceasefire between India and Pakistan.<sup>7</sup>

These multiple remarks by the US President have done dis-service to the cause of the India–US partnership. His initial announcement regarding the ceasefire probably stemmed from his desire to appear influential for the cause of peace on the international arena. Moreover, Trump’s claim went counter to the long-stated policy of India that it would not countenance any third party mediation between India and Pakistan.

India emphatically asserted shortly after Trump’s announcement on 10 May that the ceasefire had been reached directly between India and Pakistan when the Pakistan Director General Military Operations (DGMO) called his Indian counterpart and pleaded for a ceasefire, a request to which India acceded to.<sup>8</sup> In the press conference on 13 May, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs categorically stated that the ceasefire was agreed to in direct talks between the senior military officers of India and Pakistan and that no third country was involved.<sup>9</sup>

This became absolutely clear when PM Modi addressing the nation on 12 May did not make any reference to America as far as the ceasefire between India and Pakistan is concerned. In his address, he laid out a ‘New Normal’ for dealing with terrorism from Pakistan. The prime minister stated that any act of terror will be treated as an act of war and will be responded to as such. Moreover, terror and trade, terror and talks will not go together and blood and water will also not flow together.<sup>10</sup>

In a pointed rebuttal to Rubio’s assertion that “talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site” will take place, PM Modi made it very clear that the only conversation with Pakistan will be on stopping terrorism from Pakistan, and on the return of

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<sup>5</sup> [\*\*“Trump Praises ‘Strong’ India, Pak Leadership on Ceasefire Deal”\*\*](#), *The Tribune*, 12 May 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Fatimah Amjad, [\*\*“Trump Calls for Deeper India-Pakistan Engagement, Hails US Role in Ceasefire at Riyadh Forum”\*\*](#), *Arab News*, 14 May 2025.

<sup>7</sup> [\*\*“Convinced India, Pakistan to Let's Have Peace: President Trump Repeats His Claim”\*\*](#), *The Hindu*, 14 May 2025.

<sup>8</sup> [\*\*“Statement by Foreign Secretary”\*\*](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 10 May 2025.

<sup>9</sup> [\*\*“Trump Didn't Broker India-Pakistan Ceasefire, MEA Gives Timeline of How It Happened”\*\*](#), *Firstpost*, 14 May 2025.

<sup>10</sup> [\*\*“English Rendering of PM’s Address to The Nation”\*\*](#), Press Information Bureau, Prime Minister’s Office, Government of India, 12 May 2025.

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) to India. It has also been categorically stated that there will be no re-think on the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty till Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support to terrorism against India. This position was reiterated by EAM S Jaishankar on 15 May 2025.<sup>11</sup>

Trump’s statements also equated India and Pakistan while it is clear that Pakistan is the perpetrator of terrorism and India the victim. After the Pahalgam attack, the whole world stood with India that the victims of the barbarous massacre should be given justice and the perpetrators be made to pay for this heinous crime.

Trump’s messages on the Truth Social platform and other statements sound all the more jarring given that during PM Modi’s visit to the White house on 13 February 2025, the two leaders agreed that in addition to the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, a Pakistani origin Canadian citizen and mastermind of the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attack, they will push back against cross-border terrorism from Pakistan and act against activities of JeM, LeT, ISIS, Al Qaida.

It is internationally known that Pakistan is the epicentre of terror. Most terror acts around the world have a link to Pakistan including the 9/11 attacks, the London tube bombings, and innumerable attacks in India. Trump himself, during his first Term, in his first tweet of 2018 on 1 January 2018, wrote:

The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!<sup>12</sup>

Neither Trump nor Rubio in their latest statements have referred to Pakistan’s long history of support to global terrorism and cross-border terrorism against India. This will further encourage the jihadi elements in Pakistan’s army and its spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence, to launch more acts of terrorism against India as well as globally.

On the Kashmir issue, Trump has suggested that he will try to negotiate between the two countries. He made a similar faux pas during his first term also. While speaking with the then PM Imran Khan, he wrongly claimed that PM Modi had asked him to negotiate on the issue of Kashmir between the two countries. The US State Department had quickly sprung into action then to clarify that Kashmir is a bilateral issue to be resolved through negotiations between India and Pakistan.<sup>13</sup> It would

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<sup>11</sup> [“Indus Treaty On Hold Till Pak Stops Exporting Terror: Jaishankar”](#), *The Times of India*, 16 May 2025.

<sup>12</sup> [“The United States Has Foolishly Given Pakistan More Than 33 Billion Dollars In Aid...”](#), X (formerly Twitter), 1 January 2018.

<sup>13</sup> [“Kashmir A Bilateral Issue, Says U.S. State Dept After Trump Comment on Mediation”](#), *The Hindu*, 10 July 2019.

perhaps be prudent for the US State Department to once again clarify the US position on the issue.

India has made it amply clear that the only remaining issue on the Kashmir question is the return of illegally occupied POK by Pakistan to India. No other talks on Kashmir are necessary nor will be held. Trump’s offer to negotiate can only further encourage the Pakistan army, ISI and terrorist groups supported, funded, financed and trained by them to launch more terrorist attacks against India which will invite a crippling and debilitating action against these terror groups as well as the Pakistani military establishment.

Trump has also stated that he has used the instrument of trade to pressurise India and Pakistan to accede to the ceasefire. India would not wish to be placed in a situation where it is pressurised to change its sovereign decisions related to its national interest. If Trump can use trade, he could also use the instrument of supply of defence technology, defence equipment or critical and emerging technologies in the future.

Such statements can significantly erode the trust level between the two countries and set back the high level of confidence achieved over the last 25 years. It will take a lot of effort by the US administration to restore the trust between the two countries. PM Modi had termed the rapidly expanding and evolving bilateral relationship as an “indispensable partnership” and a “partnership of trust”.<sup>14</sup> The US needs to work hard to remove the cobwebs of doubt and misgivings to restore the relations to the earlier status of trust and confidence.

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<sup>14</sup> Ashok Sajjanhar, [\*\*“India-U.S. Relations: The Blossoming of an Indispensable Partnership”\*\*](#), *The Sunday Guardian*, 31 December 2022.

## About the Author



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