

MP-IDSA *Commentary*

Sergio Gor and the Future Trajectory of India-US Relations

Ashok Sajjanhar

August 29, 2025

S*ummary*

Additional responsibilities related to South and Central Asian Affairs on the new US Ambassadorial nominee could lead to diminished attention on the India-US 'Global and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'.

Taking to his Truth Social platform on 22 August, US President Donald Trump announced the nomination of Sergio Gor as his new Ambassador to India. Trump declared that in addition to his responsibilities as the US Ambassador to India, Gor will also be ‘Special Envoy for South and Central Asian Affairs’. Commending Gor, Trump wrote

As Director of Presidential Personnel, Sergio and his team have hired nearly 4,000 America First Patriots across every Department of our Federal Government in RECORD time — Our Departments and Agencies are over 95% filled!

Trump described Gor as “a great friend” and said that Gor

has been at my side for many years. He worked on my Historic Presidential Campaigns, published my Best Selling Books, and ran one of the biggest Super PACs, which supported our Movement.

He added

For the most populous Region in the World, it is important that I have someone I can fully trust to deliver on my Agenda and help us, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN. Sergio will make an incredible Ambassador.¹

Trump's announcement has three aspects that stand out. Firstly, this nomination came more than seven months after Trump was sworn in as President. Ambassadors to several other countries, including China, France, Japan, and the UK, among others, have already been nominated, and several have already assumed office after receiving confirmation from the US Senate.

Secondly, the nomination has come at a time when relations between India and the US are trending downward. Bilateral ties started improving after President Bill Clinton's visit to India in March 2000. There are several reasons for this downward trend. The foremost is India's robust denial of any role by Trump in bringing about a ceasefire between India and Pakistan after the military conflict from 7 May to 10 May 2025.

In addition, the tariff negotiations between India and the US have stalled. However, it did appear around the end of June/beginning of July that the two countries were close to a final deal. Twenty-five per cent reciprocal tariffs were imposed on India on 1 August 2025. Further, penalty tariffs of 25 per cent were announced on August 7 because India was purchasing oil from Russia, which was seen as helping Russia continue its war against Ukraine. India has made it clear that it considers the US approach of imposing 25 per cent tariffs and confirming an additional 25 per cent as

¹ Subhajit Roy, “[Trump Appoints Close Aide Sergio Gor as Next US Ambassador to India](#)”, *The Indian Express*, 24 August 2025.

secondary sanctions due to its purchase of Russian oil ‘unfair, unjustified, and unreasonable’.² Moreover, India is a founder-member of BRICS, which Trump considers to be anti-American, determined to replace the dollar as the global reserve currency.

Thirdly, Trump, in his Truth Social post, did not refer to the significant progress India–US bilateral ties have made over the last 25 years since they commenced their upward trajectory to reach the current level of ‘Global Comprehensive Strategic Partnership’.

Sergio Gor has been described in the media as ‘maybe the most powerful man you’ve never heard of’ and the ‘Mayor of Mar-a-Lago’.³ He is considered a key figure in Trump’s inner circle. Gor and President Trump’s eldest son co-founded the firm Winning Team Publishing, which has published several books authored by the president and other leading conservative figures. Following Trump’s successful 2024 campaign, Gor was appointed to run the White House Presidential Personnel Office, responsible for selecting candidates for several key positions across the federal government.

If Gor's close access to President Trump is his greatest asset, his lack of significant foreign policy experience can be considered his biggest drawback. However, lack of exposure to India or foreign policy has rarely been a disqualification for US ambassadorial positions, which presidents from both parties have often awarded to political supporters, friends and fundraisers. Former President Joe Biden’s ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, was a one-time Los Angeles mayor who was a national Co-Chair of his 2020 presidential campaign.

Remarks from the US establishment have been positive and effusive. For instance, Steve Bannon, Trump’s former chief strategist and still a key MAGA figure, has called Gor's nomination a positive development for India and said his closeness to the president will serve both countries. Others like South Asia analyst Michael Kugelman recognised the potential upside of the nomination and noted that it “could be a positive step for India as the US is signalling the importance of ties with India by having the special envoy for two key regions be posted in Delhi”.⁴

Indian strategic experts, though, are alarmed at Gor's nomination. Several of them are acutely concerned about his dual role. The Ambassador to India will simultaneously function as the Special Envoy for South and Central Asian Affairs. For instance, Kanwal Sibal, India’s former foreign secretary, sharply criticised the

² [“Statement by Official Spokesperson”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 6 August 2025.

³ [“Sergio Gor: What Trump's Man in Delhi Means for India”](#), *The Economic Times*, 23 August 2025.

⁴ Michael Kugelman, [“If Gor is confirmed as ambassador to India and also serves in the special envoy role, then...”](#), X (formerly Twitter), 23 August 2025.

move. Writing on X (formerly Twitter), he noted, "This is a new form of 'hyphenating' India and Pakistan again, amongst other things. This special envoy mandate also blurs the focus on the Indo-Pacific dimension of US-India ties".⁵ Brahma Chellaney notes that the nominee's role as special envoy for South and Central Asia will reduce India "from a global partner to a South Asian player".⁶

The India–US partnership is a critical and challenging assignment that demands the complete undivided attention of the US ambassador stationed in New Delhi. By assigning additional responsibilities to the individual, the relationship will likely not get the due time and attention it needs. The re-hyphenation of India–Pakistan and a reduction in India's standing as a strategic US partner may not augur well for the health of the India–US bilateral relations.

⁵ Kanwal Sibal, "[It's the first time that a US ambassador to India is also a Special Envoy for South and Central Asian affairs...](#)", X (formerly Twitter), 23 August 2025.

⁶ Brahma Chellaney, "[Trump waited over seven months — until U.S.-India ties had sunk to a new low — to name an ambassador to India...](#)", X (formerly Twitter), 23 August 2025.

About the Author



Amb. Ashok Sajjanhar

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses is a non-partisan, autonomous body dedicated to objective research and policy relevant studies on all aspects of defence and security. Its mission is to promote national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defence and security-related issues.

Disclaimer: Views expressed in Manohar Parrikar IDSA's publications and on its website are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Manohar Parrikar IDSA or the Government of India.

© Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) 2025