

# Washington Visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India

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**Q1: As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh heads for Washington, where does India fit into the Obama administration's policy?**

**A1:** India has become a major bilateral partner. It is the principal power in the Indian Ocean, increasingly a player in Asia-wide political and economic deliberations, with a lively security relationship with the United States. The United States had \$61 billion in bilateral goods trade with India in 2007, the most recent available year. Additionally, India exported approximately \$19 billion in software and related services to the United States in 2007, making the United States India's top trading partner and India a significant trading partner for the United States.

**Q2: What about India's long-standing problems with Pakistan? Will the United States push an India-Pakistan peace initiative?**

**A2:** For Pakistan, India is the primary security threat; for India, the greatest strategic challenge comes from China, but Pakistan and the militants operating from its territory threaten India's regional and domestic security. Do not expect a U.S. peace initiative, however: the accent will continue to be on bilateral India-Pakistan efforts. The peace dialogue that started in 2004 was torpedoed by the attacks on Mumbai. India and Pakistan have been exploring ways to restart their back-channel discussions, which had proved to be the most effective mechanism for narrowing their differences. The principal hang-up is the slow and erratic progress of Pakistan's legal actions against major figures accused of involvement in the Mumbai attacks. Although the United States will encourage this process, it will be an India-Pakistan affair.

**Q3: What is India's involvement in Afghanistan?**

**A3:** India has had close relations with Afghanistan for centuries. Its principal role since the present government was formed has been economic, with about \$1.2 billion in aid. From the U.S. point of view, this is good—India's aid adds to Afghanistan's civilian capacity and diversifies its donor base. Pakistan is deeply suspicious and tends to look on any Indian activity in Afghanistan as a threat. India wants the United States to retain an effective presence in Afghanistan until the country's stability and viability are reasonably well in hand. It does not want to see the Taliban return.

**Q4: President Obama, who was in China last week, will be receiving Prime Minister Singh at the White House this week. What role are the two rising Asian giants—China and India—playing in the larger region?**

**A4:** China is India's principal strategic challenge, but also an important economic partner, with its goods trade now larger than that of the United States. China attaches somewhat less importance to its relations with India and has a long-standing connection with Pakistan. India-China relations will continue to have ups and downs. At the moment, China is pushing on the sensitive issues between the two countries, publicly raising a long-dormant claim to one of India's northeastern states. As India's economy and its international role grow, it aspires to the kind of international position China has; China is likely to try to make this process difficult.

For the United States, the region from the Persian Gulf to the Pacific is increasingly central to foreign and security policy. The United States does not want to see one power dominate this area, but both President Obama's trip to East Asia and the visit of Manmohan Singh illustrate the U.S. interest in engaging with all the major players in the region.

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