

# Delaware Dundee: Tech, Trade And Trust

**Quad has become a cornerstone of the US-India partnership. But US should refine its outreach to India in areas beyond defence and technology, writes India's G20 Sherpa**

- *Amitabh Kant* \*

As the world contends with geopolitical shifts, the United States remains the formidable economic power, having retained 26% of global GDP and 44% of global market capitalisation while housing just 4% of the global population. For India to fulfil its aspirations of becoming a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 and establish itself as a global superpower, robust economic engagement with the U.S. is essential. Historically, nations that have experienced surges in economic growth, such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China, have integrated high export volumes to the U.S. into their economic strategies. If India is to replicate this success, strengthening trade and expanding technological collaboration with the U.S. must be at the forefront of its strategic endeavours.

It is in this context that PM Modi's recent visit to the USA gains prominence. Covering aspects ranging from clean energy, healthcare, technology, to the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), this visit is historic for several reasons.

PM Modi's recent meetings with tech leaders in the U.S. are setting a bright course for India's technological future. By teaming up with industry giants like Nvidia and General Atomics, PM Modi has laid out an exciting vision of India as a rising hub for artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics. Tapping into its vast data resources will enable India to provide well-rounded solutions to pressing global challenges. In this exchange, the United States can amplify India's already impressive technological capabilities through the sharing of cutting-edge innovations, encouraging a dynamic partnership that will be vital for both nations to thrive in an increasingly competitive global market.

Innovation drives growth, creates jobs, enhances productivity and fosters a competitive environment. India has immense potential to be an innovative nation, and we have much to learn from the US, and particularly the Silicon Valley in becoming a product nation. We must invest in applied research, pivot towards market oriented innovation, and emphasise industry oriented skill development in higher education. Key to this is establishing research hubs linked to top universities, encouraging collaboration between academia, industry, and government.

India's first national security semiconductor fabrication plant, 'Shakti,' is a demonstration of strength in the India-U.S. relationship. Facilitated by the India Semiconductor Mission and a "strategic technology partnership between Bharat Semi, 3rdiTech, and the U.S. Space Force," the state-of-the-art Shakti facility will supply advanced chips to the U.S. military, allied forces, and India's own defence apparatus starting 2025. This will take the India-U.S. partnership into a deeper realm of long-term strategic collaboration that could redefine the security and technological landscape in the Indo-Pacific region.

For India, this ambition is fundamentally rooted in uplifting the most marginalised members of society, ensuring that progress reaches the last person in line. The Prime Minister's emphasis on 'AI for all' is a commitment to utilising new-age technologies for social progress across sectors such as healthcare and education, laying the groundwork for meaningful partnerships with the U.S. on one hand, and the Global South on the other.

At the heart of India's inclusive growth strategy is its impressive digital public infrastructure (DPI), which has been transformative in promoting financial inclusion and delivering essential, leakage-free services. Initiatives like Aadhaar enable access to various government programmes, ensuring that benefits reach even the most disadvantaged populations. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has revolutionised digital transactions, making financial services more accessible and efficient for millions. Through its G20 Presidency, India was able to advocate for a common definition of DPI and achieve consensus on the G20 Framework for Digital Public Infrastructure, enabling nations worldwide to embrace, develop, and scale similar DPI systems. As India advances its already vibrant digital infrastructure, the U.S. is recognising the relevance of India's DPI in global efforts to promote equitable access to digital technologies. Cooperation in digital frameworks will facilitate trade and innovation while also enhancing global collaboration in fields such as cybersecurity, privacy standards, and financial technology. By establishing mutual frameworks and guidelines for data governance and digital economy practices, India and the U.S. can set benchmarks for other nations.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, has become a cornerstone of the India US partnership, providing a platform for collaborative security efforts in a region increasingly pressured. The recent Quad summit reinforced the commitment of India, the U.S., Japan, and Australia to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific, showcasing their collective will to tackle security challenges.

In this environment, IPEF presents a real opportunity for deeper economic engagement. While India has already committed to three of the four pillars—clean economy, fair economy, and resilient supply chains—finer points of the trade pillar toned to be ironed out. . The Prime Minister's recent visit to the U.S. stresses the importance of this relationship, in the efforts for India to be positioned as a key player in both regional and global economic systems. The existential threat posed by climate change, and tensions with competing powers will demand resilience and adaptability in our bilateral ties.

Prime Minister Modi has redefined diaspora engagement by actively connecting with Indian communities abroad, showcasing their contributions and highlighting their role as ambassadors for this bilateral relationship. Through initiatives that promote cultural exchanges, educational partnerships, and people-to-people interactions, both nations can build a more empathetic relationship that transcends changing political realities and focuses instead on shared values.

As both countries embark on these collaborative endeavours, the U.S. should also refine its outreach to India in areas beyond defence and technology. For instance, investing in India's

burgeoning renewable energy sector, including green hydrogen initiatives, could align with both nations' climate goals while yielding significant economic benefits. Joint efforts to combat climate change can serve as a fertile ground for collaboration, reinforcing broader strategic ties. This aligns with the growing consensus that climate change is the defining challenge of our era—a challenge that demands collective action.

Looking ahead, as India and the U.S. deepen their partnership, they also have the opportunity to inspire a newly forged network of alliances with like-minded countries. This collaboration—comprising democracies across continents—can be instrumental in addressing shared challenges from pandemics to economic stability, thereby reinforcing their roles as leaders in a multipolar world.

The window of opportunity is wide open, and it is incumbent upon both nations to seize it. Prime Minister Modi's visit represents a significant step toward harnessing this potential. The semiconductor plant at Shakti is just the beginning; it serves as a catalyst that can propel the bilateral relationship to new heights, setting a precedent for future collaborations and ultimately contributing to a more stable and prosperous international order.

*\* The author is India's G20 Sherpa and former CEO, NITI Aayog. Views expressed are personal.*

---