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Obama in India: What's at Stake?

Written by [Rafaya Sufi](#) on November 5, 2010



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US President Barack Obama shakes hands with India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during meetings on the sideline of the G20 Summit in Toronto on June 27, 2010. (Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images)

President Obama's upcoming trip to India has raised a few questions: Who will he meet? Which sites will he visit? And most importantly, what does his visit mean for the US and the host country?

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India has been preparing night and day to make the President's stay comfortable and drama-free. A possible threat of falling coconuts has been eliminated, and the US, as reported by *NDTV*, has sent 34 warships and 40 planes to India to guard the President. The only thing that seems to have been left behind in Washington is the White House.

Obama's visit comes at an auspicious time - *Diwali*, the annual Hindu "festival of lights." But what will Obama really gain in India? After losing their majority in the House of Representatives, the Democrats are angered by the cost associated with the President's trip. Indians, on the other hand, are celebrating his visit to their country, but will welcome him in a rather subdued manner.

Many Indians feel that the US has neglected India while cultivating strategic relationships with its military rival, Pakistan. A \$2 billion aid package to Pakistan's military has likely hampered Obama's effort to deepen mutual friendship and ties with India, and that, many feel, the first step the President takes should be to reassure India that it is an ally, and no other. Announcing that hefty packet ahead of his visit to India was almost certainly ill-timed.

In terms of foreign investment, Obama's visit will probably raise political concerns among Indians in an arena where huge numbers of jobs could be at stake.

However, one issue that both countries can safely agree upon is China's rising political and economic power. What Indians are hoping for, it seems likely, is US recognition of India's power in the region.

Discuss: With so much at stake, what is the most important achievement Obama can expect from his trip to India? Share your thoughts with us below.

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I have a feeling that US and India can learn a lot from each other and can contribute a lot to each other as well. what makes the relationship work depends on whether they are coming out of fear (China-Pakistan counter balance), self interest, mutual interest or commitment to deeper collaboration that we call integral partnership (please see our blog on HBR site http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2010/11/can_the_us_and_india_really_work_together.html) there is a potential for greater benefit to both countries as they go higher on collaboration ladder!

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