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Abstract

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Keywords: Indo-American Relations, Strategic Partnerships, Political Engagement, Howdy Modi Event

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Indo-American Relations during Narendra Modi's Era: A Critical Analysis

Abstract

The administration of Narendra Modi in India has been active in signing agreements on clean energy and focusing on advancing renewable energy strategies in India. Narendra Modi's clean energy initiative has boosted his image in public. Under Narendra Modi India's economy has seen significant development which contributed to the satisfactory political standing of Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP). Narendra Modi's efforts to develop friendly relations with the President of the United States Donald Trump were aimed at balancing trade relations as well as security concerns in Asia. Diplomatic ties between India and America have grown significantly under Modi through several collaborations and high-profile events. The joint visit of Modi and Trump to Motera Stadium in India highlighted their growing Diplomatic and personal relations. They focused on Tackling terrorism, securing a safer 5G network, and enhancing energy partnerships. Despite collaborations, there were challenges in their relations regarding trade issues and deviating priorities.

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Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Literature Review](#)
- [Strategic Partnerships and Political Engagement](#)
- [Technology and Modernization Collaboration](#)
- [Cultural Exchanges](#)
- [Key Cultural Events](#)
- [Namaste Trump \(2020\)](#)
- [Diplomatic and Cultural Representation](#)
- [State Visits and Symbolic Waves](#)
- [Security and Defense as Bright Spots for Indo-US Relationship](#)
- [Challenges and Opportunities](#)
- [Comparison between Modi and Trump](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [References](#)

Keywords: [Indo-American Relations](#), [Strategic Partnerships](#), [Political Engagement](#), [Howdy Modi Event](#)

Introduction

The administration led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India was highly concerned about addressing climate change and Modi's administration actively signed international agreements on clean energy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's support and favor for clean energy initiatives played a major role in this posture. This situation helped Modi to boost his status among the

public especially as the United States was seen stepping back from the climate change struggle. There were also other internal aspects within India that influenced its strategies regarding climate change and the acceptance of renewable energy sources. The robustness of India's economy contributes to the BJP's good position in the polls. India's economy has grown from being the tenth largest in the world to the fifth largest since Narendra Modi took office as prime minister in 2014. We'll be

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closely monitoring Modi's economic policies if he wins a third term. Policy uncertainty may also be decreased by political stability. The government took the initiative in the run-up to the election. Prior to the model code of conduct going into force on March 16 (Nadadur, 2024), a number of important policies were revealed. These included the sanctioning of new semiconductor projects, a free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association, a strategy to draw in international electric car businesses, changes to the pricing of liquefied petroleum gas, and the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Literature Review

In the article *where the Indo-US relations headed?* Bharuch (2017) stated that when President Trump took office, India was not sure that they would get support from the newly elected President also they doubted the Foreign policy of Trump. During Prime Minister Modi's visit to the United States, there were low expectations about their cooperation but they got support from Trump in many areas. India was very concerned and worried about China's cooperating projects in South Asia as well as in the Indian Ocean. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was a big concern for India as it goes through Kashmir and it dares their sovereignty. During Narendra Modi's meeting with Trump India got support on this issue. Pakistan has often been a point of disagreement in Indo-US relations. In a recent joint statement United States supported India for requesting Pakistan to stop backing and supporting terrorism. The statement urged Pakistan to restrict using its land for launching terrorist attacks on other countries. Attacks like the 26/11 or Pathankot incidents were carried out by groups in Pakistan, India's request also made Pakistan think about bringing to justice the people responsible for these attacks (Baruah et.al., 2017). This article lacks information about trade and other agreements between both the countries.

In the article named, *A Review of Indo-US Strategic Relations and its Future*, Ghatak, and Ujwal Kumar (2018) stated that the joint statement given by Donald Trump and Narendra Modi urged Pakistan not to let its land be used for terrorist attacks in other states. They asked Pakistan to quickly bring to justice those behind past cross-border attacks, like the 26/11 Mumbai and Pathankot incidents. Both leaders work to eliminate safe places for terrorists and fight together against global terrorism. They pledged to collaborate against groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and others. The US and India enhanced their partnership and the US also agreed to sell drones to India. They also joined hands to expand maritime security (Ghatak, 2018). This article focuses on the positive aspects only, it does not highlight the obstacles or drawbacks both the countries faced. The

exploration and depth analysis of multiple aspects is not there in the article.

In a book named *How India Sees the World*, Saran (2018) highlighted that in recent times, there have been prominent events including Donald Trump becoming the president of the United States; the UK deciding to leave the European Union EU, etc. Due to these changes, there was a fear of the fading power of certain countries. After the Cold War UN Security Council members and other countries also supported India so 25 years after the Cold War was good for India's security and also for the economy, a nuclear deal was also signed between the US and India in 2008. The support of different countries for India affected Pakistan. Pakistan is no longer able to get support or rely on international assistance against India. During the Trump era, India and the US have increased cooperation regarding counterterrorism and it is a big change as compared to the past but with President Trump, major trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) might not progress, and the US could seek to renegotiate other trade deals. This might have implications for India's economic position (Saran, 2018). Some changes are discussed in the article but economic, geopolitical, and social factors that lead to these changes are not discussed, in-depth information about the factors could help the reader a better understanding.

In an article titled, *The U.S. – India Relationship is Bigger than Trump and Modi*; Burns (2020) stated that interactions between Donald Trump and Narendra Modi go through mutual admiration and political display. While their partnership has strategic foundations based on economic interests, and concerns about China, questions arise about its potential and the erosion of democratic ideals. Historically, India's nuclear program was a tentative block, but a deal was reached under President George W. Bush's leadership. Trump and Modi share a political similarity, yet their leadership styles and backgrounds are different. Modi put stress on Hindu majoritarianism among economic challenges and this stress raises concerns. Their appealing political performances and approaching joint events in Gujarat highlight their unique bond. However, the success of their partnership remains undefined, with potential values for both countries and the broader geopolitical background. In spite of having historical difficulties, they built cooperation on common values and strategic interests (Burns, 2020). Discussions in the article revolve around the shared goals that led to the partnership between Narendra Modi and Donald Trump, there remains a gap in understanding the impact on democratic norms and the comprehensive global political landscape.

Early Interactions between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi

The relationship between India and the United States has been stressed for much of the last 70 years because of various political and strategic the relationship between the United States and India was strained due to various strategic and political anxieties. During the Cold War Era, the United States supported Pakistan and issues like the neutral stance of India and the U.S. efforts to stop India's nuclear development triggered tensions. However, currently, both countries share common interests in security and strategy. They work together to battle terrorism, address China's forcefulness, and promote peace in Asia. This shift in relations between countries started with changes in global politics in the 1990s (Levesque, 2020). The Donald Trump administration considered India as a vital partner for maintaining a balance of power and peace in Asia. India has moved away from its neutral stand and pursued partnerships to protect its interests. Both countries worked together and their cooperation is visible in agreements such as the Joint strategic vision for the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean Region. However, there are still different challenges including past mistrust and differences in priorities The United States and India cooperate on security issues like counterterrorism and defense perfection in Asia. India faced threats from Pakistan-based militant groups, and Prime Minister Modi wanted the United States to take a stronger stance against Pakistan's backing for these groups. The U.S. has been hesitant and doubtful due to its reliance on Pakistan for operations in Afghanistan, but India hoped for stronger action if the United States' contribution to Afghanistan decreased. During their first meeting, Trump emphasized the significance of the strategic alliance between the United States and India and promised to uphold the bipartisan backing that has defined this partnership for nearly two decades. The leaders' joint statement reaffirmed values that have been upheld by recent American presidents and emphasized how an increasingly powerful and developed India is in the best interests of the United States. By sticking to this strategy, Trump reaffirmed to both countries that his administration cherishes and seeks to fortify U.S.-Indian relations, demonstrating both leaders' dedication to this vital alliance. Even while the meeting was deemed successful, there are still a number of issues. Unresolved issues include those related to intellectual property rights, climate change, and the H-1B visa program. Furthermore, it's unclear if Modi and Trump have come to a consensus on regional problems, especially those involving China. Trump's "America First" (Desai, 2017), approach may damage economic ties between the United States and India, which could exacerbate trade tensions. Trump repeatedly brought up the trade deficits between the United States and India during their joint speech. The peculiar and frequently tense handshakes that President Trump intended to send a message to foreign leaders

were one of the more fascinating parts of his presidency. Notable instances include his extended handshake with the prime minister of Japan and his firm grasp with the president of France, which raised questions about how Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi might perform. In response to Trump's handshake, Modi made his signature bear hug. Modi gave Trump three hugs during their five-hour meeting; while this startled Trump at first, it was generally seen as a successful tactic. Social media users hailed the gesture as a diplomatic triumph that demonstrated warmth and assurance. Although Modi has given other leaders hugs, Indian authorities have stated that this particular hug is only given to his closest allies.

Strategic Partnerships and Political Engagement

Narendra Modi the Prime Minister of India visited Washington on June 26, 2017(Walter, 2017), especially to build a strong connection with the President of the United States Donald Trump as Donald Trump values personal links. This meeting was aimed to establish a unique image for Indo-US relations and to address potential subjects. The cooperation and partnership between the United States and India were becoming stronger and more logical because both countries shared common concerns about the influence of China, threats regarding terrorism, and stability in Afghanistan. Both states also prioritize maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region.

Though challenges lie ahead, the foreign policy of Donald Trump was unpredictable and impulsive so, Trump's foreign policy approach raised insecurity for India. There was a doubt that Donald Trump might unsoften his stance on Pakistan to gain assistance in Afghanistan and this possibility could affect the security of India. Moreover, Trump's focus on Buy American, Hire American could clash with Modi's Make in India initiative, delaying economic ties. Moreover, key positions in the Trump administration related to India and Asia-Pacific remain unoccupied, and it caused tension in New Delhi. These aspects could cause worries in the relationship between India and the United States in the future. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was known for traveling a lot and it was claimed that he did not say much in India even when there was violence against certain groups. Narendra Modi visited Washington, DC, to meet the President of the United States, Donald Trump. Meeting with Trump was seen as important and positive for Modi's image as a global leader, especially for his supporters who admire him as a strong leader like Trump. Modi was accused of involvement in violence against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 so before becoming Prime Minister he was banned from entering the United States. But, the Presidents of the United States welcomed him soon after becoming Prime Minister of India in 2014. Obama and Trump both the leaders recognized the

influence Modi had on India's politics, and they wanted to work with him despite the fact that there were concerns about his priorities (Prashad, 2017)

Washington's policy officials have significant ties to India, which is seen as one of the US's top strategic priorities. But there is now a breach in India and the US's strategic alignment as a result of the Taliban's revival in Afghanistan. The resurgence of the Taliban has complicated the overall regional strategy and made it more difficult for India to manage its interests in Afghanistan. India must now balance resolving its security concerns with its approach to the Taliban. Tensions between China and India as well as between India and Pakistan have increased as a result of the Taliban's comeback. The attack on the Sikh temple, the Karta-e-Parwan Gurudwara, in Kabul on June 18, 2022, serves as fresh evidence of the region's increasingly unstable security condition. This incident has raised Indian concerns about the Taliban and raised questions about the viability of an extended or re-established Indian presence in Afghanistan.

India and the United States differed greatly from one another, especially when it came to trade policy. Given the strategic significance of having excellent relations with the greatest economy in the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an effort to keep his relationship with the US cordial. Modi has to carefully negotiate trade negotiations in order to partially align with US interests. But Modi also had to think about what that meant for his own nation. His government's top priorities, which included fostering economic expansion, defending homegrown businesses, and generating employment, were vital. Moreover, he needed to attend to the worries of Indian voters, who may have had conflicting emotions toward yielding to the United States. One strategy Modi used to placate then-President Donald Trump was to increase India's arms imports from the US. The objective of this approach was to demonstrate India's dedication to their relationship and to fortify defense relations. Nevertheless, there remained debate regarding this choice. Given that a large portion of the Indian population still lived in poverty, several critics said that India had no business spending such large sums of money on military hardware. They thought that these funds would be more effectively used for infrastructure and social activities. Essentially, Modi's endeavor to strike a balance between local demands and international diplomacy emphasizes the complex interplay between national interests and international alliances. Building a solid alliance with the United States was a strategic objective, but it also generated discussion over how best to allocate India's financial resources to solve security issues as well as socioeconomic problems.

Technology and Modernization Collaboration

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and President of the United States Donald Trump visited India's Sardar Patel Stadium which is also known as Motera Stadium more than 100,000 people welcomed them warmly (Bannerman, 2020). Both the leaders discussed plans for cooperation in tackling and fighting against terrorism; they confirmed collaborations between India and the United States. They planned to grow their energy partnership and work together to make 5G technology safer. A deal was publicized between United States firm Exxon Mobil and Indian Oil to support India's imports of more Liquefied Natural Gas (LPG).

During the visit, Ajit Pai from the FCC, along with Indian officers, discussed IT and telecom-related problems. They aimed to extend the relationship between the two countries and talked about joining the digital gap. While specific details of the meetings were not revealed, discussions reportedly touched on 5G services, technology, and IoT, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing, education, and healthcare. India's Department of Telecommunications approved the process for its 5G spectrum auction, with 6,050MHz allocated for 5G, priced at ₹492 core per MHz (Bannerman, 2020). Donald Trump stated that the United States and India were close to signing a \$3 billion deal for United States 'military helicopters, including MH-60 Romeo helicopters and AH-64E Apache helicopters. He voiced hopefulness about reaching a fantastic deal beneficial for both countries, while they were still in the early stages of negotiations.

India is becoming a popular place for foreign businesses to invest in. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently met with 21 CEOs from big American companies like Apple, Google, and Amazon. The meeting appeared successful, with CEOs like Tim Cook and Jeff Bezos saying positive things about it (Kelly, n.d.), Narendra Modi stated that Indo succeeded in attracting foreign investment and making it easier to do business there. Modi also cited upcoming changes including a new tax system. American companies are concerned about helping India grow, particularly in areas like technology and reducing the use of cash. However, India is still going through challenges like complex rules for businesses and a need for more expert workers. Despite these challenges, India's economy is rising, and India is becoming an important partner for the United States.

Shared Ideologies: Nationalism and Populism

Two major political trends were seen in India and the United States and the trends include: right-wing populism and religious nationalism. Right-wing populism gained attention during the rule of Donald Trump in the United States and Narendra Modi in India. Both leaders tapped

into people's disappointment with the government, promising to represent the mutual folks. Religious nationalism has influenced policies and politics significantly as it is seen as a promotion of Hinduism in India and as a thrust for Christianity in the United States. This trend posed a challenge to the secular and materialistic foundations of both nations. The economic stagnation in the 1980s is considered a factor responsible for dissatisfaction and allowed ideologies like religious nationalism and right-wing populism to gain power. Both the leaders, Donald Trump and Narendra Modi framed their movements around the notion of national decline and presented themselves as messianic figures that could protect their nations. They highlighted alleged threats from religious minorities and attracted support from religious nationalists. Through their appointments to the judiciary both the leaders had influenced policy. In the US, Trump-appointed justices have eroded the parting of church and state, while in India, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Hindu interests in the Ram Ayodhya temple clash. Religious nationalism and right-wing populism are twisted, affecting politics and policies in both the United States and India.

Religious nationalism and populism often go hand in hand. Populism focuses on dividing people into two groups: the pure believers of the religion and the corrupt non-believers or those who oppose the nationalist ideals. This division is misused by religious nationalists to define their support base and challengers. While we haven't yet seen extensive policy effects of religious nationalism, its impact is mainly through words and ideas. When religious nationalist affectation becomes more accepted, it strengthens these movements. The danger lies in activities like large-scale attacks on democracy, as seen in events like January 6th, or political violence, such as the 2002 Gujarat Riots (Subramanian, 2024). This trend leads to a disaster of democracy, where basic rights and fair procedures are threatened by populist leaders. Even if societies become more secular overall, religious nationalism might still gain strength. If democratic processes break down, these leaders could impose policies favoring the dominant religion, eroding the rights of religious minorities in favor of a nationalist agenda.

Cultural Exchanges

Cultural exchanges between former U.S. President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi were marked by significant public presentations of companionship, extensive diplomatic engagement, and large-scale events. These events highlighted the strategic partnership between the United States and India. These exchanges reflected political and economic ties as well as cultural and personal attractions that both leaders used to strengthen bilateral relations. On the other hand, some analysts argued that support for Prime Minister Narendra

Modi among the Indian diaspora may not immediately translate to support for former President Donald Trump. This is because of worries about Trump's attitude towards minorities and his contentious comments regarding Kamala Harris's Indian ancestry. With his recent denunciation of an attempt on Trump's life, Modi addressed him as "my friend" (Mukherji, 2024), a move that garnered much media coverage, particularly considering their mutual public support in the past. At a rally in Houston, Texas, in September 2019, Donald Trump made an Elvis Presley comparison with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The event drew approximately 50,000 attendees. A cricket stadium in Ahmedabad, India, later hosted an even greater gathering for the two leaders. According to Carnegie Endowment research, approximately half of Indian Americans favor Modi, showing him considerable support. Nevertheless, given his views on ethnic minorities, some Indian Americans may be hesitant to back Trump. Indian Americans have always supported the Democratic Party; nevertheless, there was a noticeable change in favor of Trump in the elections of 2016 and 2020. Although some people might support Trump in the future, this isn't anticipated to become a widespread tendency.

Key Cultural Events

Some Important Cultural events that had significant impacts on relationship and coordination between Donald Trump and Narendra Modi are:

Howdy Modi! Event (2019)

This event was an outstanding and grand display of the Indian and American community's support for Modi. The event was held in Houston, Texas and over 50,000 attendees mainly Indians and Americans occupied the NRG Stadium (BBC, 2019), Donald Trump joined Narendra Modi on stage, which was a notable gesture highlighting the close ties between the two nations. A range of cultural acts depicting India's rich and varied past were presented during the event, and traditional dances and music from different Indian states contributed to the joyous mood. Prime Minister Modi highlighted India's achievements and goals in his speech, outlining the many projects and changes his administration has carried out. He emphasized the need for innovation, development, and improved ties between the United States and India. In his speech, President Trump emphasized the positive bilateral relationship between the two countries, highlighting the contributions made by Indian-Americans to American society and restating his administration's dedication to strengthening ties with India. Additionally, both leaders discussed how important it is to fight terrorism and how democracy and diversity are shared principles, highlighting the necessity of a united front against global issues. The "Howdy, Modi!"

event served as a forum to highlight the close relationship and mutual respect between the leaders of the two biggest democracies in the world, signifying the growing ties between them (Kapur, 2019). It emphasized the Indian-American community's significant role in promoting better ties between the United States and India as well as their contributions to a number of American industries, such as technology, healthcare, and education. The event's significance in the context of foreign diplomacy and diaspora participation was reflected in the substantial media coverage in both nations and worldwide. All things considered, "Howdy, Modi!" honored the strong alliance between India and the US, the thriving Indian-American community, and the common goals and values of both countries.

Namaste Trump (2020)

Donald Trump visited India in February 2020, and the Namaste Trump event was held at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. This event reflected the "Howdy, Modi!" (Petersen, 2020), the sight included traditional Indian dances and music, and there was also a display of a variety of Indian culture. Around 125,000 (Ellis, 2020), spectators came to honor US President Donald Trump's first trip to India. The highlight of Trump's tour was the Namaste Trump rally. Many of the enthusiastic guests wore masks that featured the faces of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump. Trump was greeted with a resounding cheer as he entered the stage. Speaking to the assembly, he declared, that America loves India, and respects India, underlining the positive influence that India has had on humanity. This incident demonstrated Trump and Modi's cordial personal and diplomatic ties. Popular music created an electric atmosphere before the talks. The Village People's "Macho Man" and Elton John's "Madman Across the Water" were played (Ellis, 2020), bringing a bright and joyous atmosphere. The occasion demonstrated both nations' profound gratitude for one another as well as the cordial and cooperative relationship between the two presidents. During his visit to India, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi demonstrated their close personal friendship. As Trump praised Modi as a true friend and exceptional leader, Modi showed the same passion for Trump by leading the masses in the salutation Namaste Trump. The India-US partnership has developed into a more substantial and profound alliance, according to Modi. Trump's address highlighted the shared values and self-governing principles of both countries, and Modi stressed the deep-rooted historical and cultural connections between India and the United States. Even with the cordial meeting, there won't be any major deals from Trump's 36-hour visit. The two nations' trade talks are still at a standstill, and Trump's speech which featured allusions to Bollywood, cricket, Diwali, Mahatma Gandhi, and Modi's

inspirational journey seemed more like a forum for exchanging compliments than a means of resolving urgent policy concerns. More ceremonial goodwill than real progress in bilateral ties characterized the visit. Since his Hindu-nationalist BJP government's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has been the subject of severe criticism and protests in India for the past three months, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit's optics were especially significant. A police officer and two civilians were killed in violent riots in Delhi on Monday afternoon, while President Trump and Prime Minister Modi exchanged cordial greetings. Trump announced a \$3 billion agreement to sell India US military helicopters during his visit. He did stress that this was still an early stage of the agreement. Additionally, Trump boasted of a possible amazing trade agreement between the United States and India, claiming it to be the biggest ever. Despite the fact that the 7 million people that were expected did not show up, the rally was still one of the biggest that Trump had ever addressed, highlighting the importance of the trip. Before Trump left, more information and developments from the trip were anticipated to be disclosed in Delhi the day after.

Diplomatic and Cultural Representation

Donald Trump and Narendra Modi both the leaders often openly expressed admiration for each other and this admiration was a significant aspect of their diplomatic relationship. They often highlighted personal empathy in their speeches and public interactions, where they mentioned each other in affectionate and welcoming terms. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former US President Donald Trump had a diplomatic and cultural relationship characterized by a combination of shared adoration, large public spectacles, and geopolitical objectives. India and the United States' strategic alliance has become stronger under the Modi-Trump administration, notably in the areas of commerce, Defence, and counterterrorism. Increased cooperation in the Indo-Pacific area resulted from both leaders' shared desire to oppose China's growing influence. The U.S. designated India as a Major Defence Partner, leading to huge Defence transactions and increased access to cutting-edge military technology, and the two countries' Defence ties deepened significantly. Trade relations, however, were tense due to disagreements over market access and tariffs. Energy cooperation has developed as a crucial area of collaboration in spite of these obstacles.

Culturally, the relationship between Modi and Trump was marked by large-scale public gatherings that emphasized their friendship. The "Howdy, Modi!" event in Houston and the "Namaste Trump" event in Ahmedabad demonstrated the goodwill and personal connection between the two leaders' nations. Realizing the importance of interacting with the Indian diaspora in

the US for the two countries' cultural interchange, both presidents gave it a lot of weight. This interaction emphasized the significance of the Indian-American community in the relationship between the United States and India and strengthened interpersonal ties. Warm bilateral ties throughout their term were facilitated by the mutual admiration and public praise that characterized the encounters between Modi and Trump. The India-US connection was significantly impacted by the Modi-Trump friendship, which also laid the groundwork for future collaboration in a number of areas. The general trend was strengthening Defence and strategic relations, notwithstanding occasional commercial disputes. The large-scale public gatherings and the focus on interpersonal relationships were emblematic of a more general trend in international diplomacy when leaders use interpersonal relationships and public diplomacy to further the strategic objectives of their nations. In the history of the changing dynamic between the two biggest democracies in the world, the Modi-Trump era is a pivotal one.

State Visits and Symbolic Waves

During state visits, both leaders engaged in culturally symbolic activities. For instance, during Trump's visit to India, he and Donald Trump visited the Taj Mahal, and this visit symbolized recognition and gratitude for India's rich cultural heritage. Similarly, Modi's engagements in the United States often included interactions with the Indian spread, supporting the cultural bonds that link the two nations (Klein, [2020](#)).

The larger strategic alliance between the United States and India was embodied in the cultural contacts between Donald Trump and Narendra Modi. Using high-profile public gatherings and symbolic acts of mutual regard, both leaders demonstrated the strengthening of bilateral ties between their countries. Events such as the "Howdy Modi" demonstration in Houston introduced India's vibrant culture to a broad American audience, celebrating the rich cultural legacy of both nations. Beyond their symbolic importance, these interactions prepared the way for further collaboration in a number of areas, including trade, technology, and defense. By highlighting the personal and cultural aspects of their diplomatic relationship, Trump and Modi sought to strengthen their alliance and harmonize their nations' interests in the international arena. The fact that these activities were public helped to involve the people of both countries, highlighting the strategic significance of the alliance between the United States and India and laying the groundwork for future cooperation and understanding.

Security and Defense as Bright Spots for Indo-US Relationship

The meeting between Donald Trump and Narendra Modi

was significant for both countries as it offered an opportunity to shape a good relationship among leaders of the world's biggest democracies. Modi wanted to present himself as a strong and practical leader whom with Trump could work. Assumed the blurred direction of Trump's policy in Asia, especially the strategy of the United States in South Asia, Modi wanted to remind President Trump of the status of the United States India's partnership and the U.S.'s assurance of long-standing stability in Afghanistan.

Trump and Modi faced challenges regarding economic issues including trade deficits and visa kinds of stuff; they were expected to find common ground on security and defense. One highlight of the visit was probably the announcement of the U.S. selling 22 unmanned Guardian drones to India, a key request from Modi. This deal, along with Lockheed Martin's recent partnership with Tata Advanced arrangements, shows the fast growth of India and United States' defense relations in the past ten years. For both the White House and Prime Minister Modi, this deal, worth about \$2-3 billion (Schiavenza, [2017](#)) was a major achievement. It helped create a positive atmosphere and paved the way for closer cooperation in the future.

US and India as the Most Populous and Powerful Democracies in the World

The Houston "Howdy Modi!" rally, which brought together U.S. President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is a powerful illustration of how far-right politics are changing. The fourth wave of postwar far-right movements, marked by greater diversity and normalization within the political mainstream, is typified by this gathering. Historically, far-right political organizations and figures have functioned at the periphery of political structures, facing difficulties in acquiring substantial sway or access to national administrations. But the fact that two well-known far-right leaders Trump and Modi were present at such a high-profile gathering suggests a significant change in the direction of their mainstream prominence and acceptance in international politics. Although it is often known that Trump shares far-right beliefs, Modi's situation serves as an especially clear example of this new movement. Modi is portrayed as a contemporary, reforming leader internationally, but his domestic policies reveal a radical, deeply ingrained Hindu nationalism. His journey from being barred from the United States because of his alleged involvement in the anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002 to being hailed by international business elites demonstrates how previously disqualifying characteristics can turn into advantages in modern political environments. Both Trump's and Modi's policies, such as the divisive "Muslim ban" (Mudde, [2019](#)), and the contentious lockdown of Kashmir, demonstrate a mutual

emphasis on Islam phobia that is well-received by their respective home bases. Due to their ability to project power and influence globally, together with their ideological overlap, far-right politics have undergone a profound change, moving from the margins to the forefront of international political discourse. Although the far-right has grown internationally in recent years, it still lacks coherence and a cohesive voice. Its varied ideologies and nationalistic orientations are mostly to blame for this dispersion. For instance, Donald Trump functions more from the gut than from a formal philosophy. He has transformed the Republican Party in the United States to fit his own vision. On the other hand, the Indian People's Party (BJP) leader Narendra Modi is based on the Sangh Parivar, a century-old ideological heritage. This lack of coherence is highlighted by recent events. While Trump has maintained a conciliatory tone towards both India and Pakistan, reflecting his more pragmatic approach, Modi has made aggressive pronouncements about Pakistan in an attempt to energize his base. Their small economic agreements demonstrate the boundaries of their cooperation. While there are occasional displays of unity among far-right politicians, such as endorsements before elections, these partnerships are frequently flimsy. The extent of their cooperation is constrained by their nationalistic and self-serving agendas, proving that although the far-right may come together on some issues, their influence on the world stage is still fractured and constrained by these nationalistic concerns.

Challenges and Opportunities

The relationship between the United States and India has not become as strong as some had hoped in Washington, in spite of shared strategic interests and efforts from the United States to accommodate India. India has not engaged fully in bilateral cooperation with the United States as expected, and India has not fully engaged in routine bilateral cooperation with the U.S. as expected, unlike its engagements with other countries like Japan and Singapore. There have been commitments and agreements between both countries on shared interests; there is a gap between what the United States expects from India and what India can deliver. The United States has invested resources and political wealth and helped India to build its military capabilities and to counter China's rise. In return, India has made concessions on issues like Iran and contributed to strategic events with the United States and its allies. However, India has not fully associated with U.S. interests, mainly in economic and defense matters. India's administrative challenges and its desire for strategic independence contribute to this misalignment. Strategic autonomy, which means the freedom to chase its own goals without unnecessary influence, is important for India as it aims to be a great

power. India had concerns about losing self-sufficiency so India was unwilling to fully align with the United States, unlike typical allies of the United States. This hesitancy has led to thoughtful engagement with the United States and a preference for inclusivity in the Indo-Pacific region rather than aligning solely with the U.S. and its partners. There was a division within the Indian establishment regarding its relations with the United States, despite this fact, the relationship has developed slowly, with the U.S. becoming more concerned about India than other non-allied states. However, India's pursuit of strategic autonomy comes with costs, including limited resources for military cooperation with the United States among efforts to engage with numerous countries. Overall, while there are common interests between the United States and India, their relationship remains complex and not as close as initially planned by some in Washington. The US imposed unilateral tariffs just over a year ago, which sparked the start of what has been called the "trade war." These levies were divided into two categories: general steel and aluminum tariffs and tariffs that were designed to target Chinese exports to the US. The US and its trading partners had talks after the steel and aluminum tariffs sparked retaliatory actions from a number of nations. In addition to Mexico and Canada, negotiations were initiated or carried out with Japan, South Korea, and Argentina. India elected to postpone the application of its retaliatory tariffs while negotiations with the US continued, despite having announced them. This raised the prospect of a possible trade package that could lead to a trade agreement between the US and India. Even with these continuing talks, there doesn't seem to be much chance of a trade deal. The circumstances have become more complex due to recent events. The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) privileges that allowed some Indian goods to enter the US market duty-free have been abolished by the US. India's refusal to grant the US "equitable and reasonable access" to its markets prompted this action. New data localization requirements enforced by India mandate the localization of payment data and place stringent limitations on the sharing of data across borders. These regulations are viewed as major roadblocks to digital trade, affecting US companies that extensively rely on data, such as newcomers like Google and WhatsApp, and payment system providers like Visa, MasterCard, and American Express. The operations of foreign e-commerce companies' subsidiaries have been severely restricted by India's new regulations for foreign online shops. US retail behemoths like Amazon and Walmart, who have been stepping up their presence in India's quickly, developing online, shopping industry, have been directly impacted by this. Further hurting trade relations is India's imposition of high tariffs on important US exports, such as cars and dairy products. The likelihood of a comprehensive trade agreement between

the United States and India has decreased due to these considerations and the wider unfavorable trade climate.

There are prospects for US-Indian cooperation in Afghanistan, albeit with certain restrictions. Contrary to appearances, there are not as many serious differences between the US and India. Trump's criticism of India's actions can be interpreted as a demand for more engagement rather than military contributions, especially in the areas of economic and development help. There hasn't been a formal US request for India to consider sending soldiers, despite Trump's repeated suggestions that it should do so. India has a complex position on holding negotiations with the Taliban. It has not completely ruled out interaction, as seen by its involvement in a Moscow conversation with Taliban representatives and unofficial outreach to the rebels, even if it rejects negotiations that do not include the Afghan government. Despite sporadic tensions and disagreements, the robust and expanding US-Indian relationship particularly in defense offers a strong basis for collaboration in Afghanistan. Regarding the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy, the United States and India hold differing opinions. While the United States concentrates more on the Pacific, India's definition of the Indo-Pacific encompasses the western Indian Ocean region. Additionally, their interests are different, with the United States focusing on the Pacific and India on the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Regarding regional issues like North Korea and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, they hold opposing opinions. While the U.S. is focused on technology arguments and continental concerns such as Huawei's inclusion in 5G networks, India is more interested in other matters. The relationship between the US and India highlights mutual criticisms regarding their commitment to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) principles. (Madan, 2019). Economically, the US criticizes India for not being sufficiently open to trade and investment, whereas India views the US as a disruptor of the established rules-based order. During the Obama administration, the Trans-Pacific Partnership was a key part of the US's strategy to engage economically with the region. However, under President Trump, this approach shifted to a more unilateral stance, characterized by tariffs that have adversely affected India along with China. India is also apprehensive about potential US policies that could restrict the immigration of highly skilled workers, which it interprets as a trade-related issue.

Comparison between Modi and Trump

While there are certain similarities between Modi and Trump, there are also some significant distinctions that are hidden. Both leaders have a similar appeal in overcoming the contempt of intellectuals and assert that they speak for disenfranchised people against the

unscrupulous elite. The urban elite and minorities in the United States oppose Trump, while the Congress and India's pseudo-secular elite support Modi. These parallels do not change the fact that their political initiatives and alliances are very different. From an ideological standpoint, Trump lacks coherence; he frequently reverses himself and finds it difficult to carry out a well-defined Trump agenda. Prior to switching to politics, he was an independent and a Democrat, demonstrating a lack of sustained ideological commitment. Modi, on the other hand, is a highly ideological politician who has his roots in the BJP and Hindu nationalist movement. The long-standing goal of this movement is to place Hindus and Hinduism at the center of India. Unlike Trump's inconsistent approaches, Modi's path is evident through his well-defined purpose. Both Donald Trump and Narendra Modi came to power through different political combinations. Within their respective majoritarian demographics Hindus for Modi and Whites for Trump both leaders received a great deal of support from both the wealthy and the poor. Their supporters' ages and geographic locations, however, are very different. Trump ran on a platform of restoring America to its former greatness, and the majority of his supporters are older voters from the suburbs and rural areas who are afraid of losing their wealth, prestige, and power. In contrast, Modi's promises of a political revolution in India drew in younger, economically aspirational urbanites. This demonstrates a key distinction between their respective support bases: although both presidents draw majoritarian nationalists, the demographic segments that back Modi in India are frequently those who oppose Trump in the United States (Staniland, 2017). The political dynamics within the parties led by Donald Trump and Narendra Modi are notably different. Many Republicans support Trump and work with him on shared objectives like Supreme Court nominations and tax cuts, but he hasn't been able to fully control the party. Many Republicans are not particularly fearful or respectful of him, often responding more to their constituencies and congressional leaders. This might change, given the willingness of some Republicans to excuse his actions, but currently, the Republican Party remains ideologically diverse and not strictly Trumpist. The limited legislative success, despite Republican majorities in both the Senate and House, highlights the challenges Trump faces within his own party.

Modi, on the other hand, has strengthened his position inside the BJP, stifling opponents and expanding his sway over important state legislatures. The BJP has become much more individualized under Modi's leadership, and it now supports him more than the Republicans do Trump. Unlike Trump, who entered politics as an outsider, Modi gained power inside the BJP and the RSS, giving him more influence within his party.

The BJP has organization and social reach that Trump does not, thanks to its established structure and ties to the RSS and Sangh Parivar. In contrast to Trump, who is subject to multiple institutional checks, internal leaks, and personal failings, Modi has stronger control over state institutions. Because it has the backing of a powerful party, solid ideological underpinnings, and a coalition of affluent urban classes, Modi's nationalist agenda is therefore more resilient and long-lasting. However, Trump is viewed as unpredictable and incompetent, which raises questions about possible disputes or catastrophes. Instead of using a disciplined party to push a separate Trump's agenda, he is more likely to use it as a vehicle to further conventional Republican objectives like slashing welfare, lowering taxes, and advancing social conservatism. Despite some similarities, such as their majoritarian tendencies, the differences between Trump and Modi suggest divergent political trajectories. This indicates that US-India relations, often highlighted due to the Trump-Modi relationship, will likely remain steady

and continue as they have since 2000, regardless of Trump's influence.

Conclusion

Narendra Modi's government has made significant paces to fortify India's global standing, particularly in areas of clean energy and international associations. Modi's efforts to develop closer relations with the United States under President Donald Trump were key facets of India's foreign policy. They focused on economic collaboration and cultural exchanges. Regardless of the challenges posed by religious nationalism and local policies, they both focused on technology, defense, and bilateral ties. The large public events like the "Namaste Trump" and the "Howdy Modi" events showed their strong coordination. In spite of having collaborations and partnerships challenges like ideological strains and policy agreements continue to shape the trail of Indo-American relations.

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