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Issue Brief

US India Relations Under Trump's Administration

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Historically, Republicans as compared to Democrats have been more inclined towards India in particular and offer a more India friendly policy in the South Asian region. However, in recent history, India and US relation has broadly remained on a steady path regardless of whether which party representative is in the office. President Donald Trump has not yet laid a definitive policy directed towards the South Asian region. A few of his statements, however, while running his Presidential campaign, as well as after taking the office of the President provides a sneak peek into the outline and contours of a policy which can be expected.

While running his campaign, President Trump in few of his tweets proclaimed his love for India and said that the Indian community will have a friend in the White House. The roots of the relations lie deep within the new Trump Administration. The Trump Administration is expected to continue and play an imperative role to re-elevate the already thick Indo-US relations. The Republican Hindu Coalition supported the campaign of President Donald Trump throughout and donated a massive amount of \$898,000 to the Trump Victory Fund. The Hindu lobby has its tentacles deep in the administration and is highly successful whilst copying the footsteps of the Republican Jewish Coalition lobby. The lobby itself is anti-Islamic and is a major voice for unfriendly Pakistani policies. The lobby works hard to be a voice of India in the Trump administration, and works hard to advance and amplify the existing trade, economic and defense relations between both the nations. The founder of the coalition supported the executive orders passed by President Trump banning immigration and proposed the administration to further ban Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia along with the seven Muslim countries that have already been banned entry into the US by an executive order issued by President Trump soon after taking office.

Trump's administration has more than five Indian American representatives serving at important positions which make Indian presence strong. The trade between both the countries stands tall at \$100 billion, while both aspire to expand it five-fold in the near future and bring the figure to an estimated \$1 trillion. Also, President Trump criticized China in his campaign and called it America's top adversary. This might also work in favour of India.

India, as well as the US, desire to magnify not only their economic and trade relations, but also uplift their strategic and defence partnerships. India is also interested in purchase of advance weapons from the US, which in all likelihood, will ensure their supply. It is also expected that legislations will be proposed in the Congress with the help of the ardent Republican Indian lobby to make it possible for certain US companies to sell advance military weaponry to India without any difficulty. Also, President Trump has vested personal business interests in India as it is a growing economy, and, has also heavily invested in the construction of Trump towers in Mumbai, Gurgaon and Pune.

President Trump also made a courtesy call to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to the White House read out, the newly elected US President emphasised on the importance of US and India relations, and discussed areas of interest which can be further strengthened. The two counterparts also discussed their bilateral relations, and committed themselves to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with each other, while addressing the security threats and terrorism in the region collectively. Although symbolic, the readout of the courtesy call deeply reflects on the kind of relation which will be seen developing between both the countries in the future. The President has also invited Prime Minister Modi to visit India, which is likely to be planned in spring this year.

Despite all the promises and statements made by President Donald Trump, there still exists certain amount of uncertainty in India. President Trump is considered to be more of an opportunist, which also makes his policy risky in nature. He lacks strong ideological views on any policy issue, and makes assessments regarding a policy based on its current standing and gains. Certain issues such as the Climate Change, immigration, and re-negotiation of trade deals which may also bring some discomfort to the relations as they are not equally important for the Trump Administration. There is a possibility that President Trump's hawkish narrative of "America first", and his idea to re-negotiate trade policies with other foreign countries might have affects on US trade policies with India.