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'Magnificent man', 'My friend': What PM Modi-Trump bromance bodes for ties

PM Narendra Modi was one of the first leaders to congratulate Donald Trump and one of the first to have a call with the President-elect after the Republican won the US poll race for the White House.

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PM Modi shares a close relationship with Donald Trump despite their chequered history (Source: @narendramodi)



India Today News Desk



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Written By: [Abhishek De](#)

In Short

- PM Modi was one of the first leaders to congratulate 'my friend' Trump
- In phone call, Trump said he considers Modi and India a 'true friend'
- US-India ties expected to strengthen, especially in defence under Trump



On the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked his 74th birthday on September 17, he received an unusual overture from then Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. Trump unilaterally announced that he would meet PM Modi during his visit to the US for the Quad Summit. While the meeting did not happen eventually, it underscored the [closeness of their relationship](#) despite their chequered history.

The camaraderie between the two leaders was on display on Wednesday as [PM Modi became one of the first leaders](#) to congratulate "my friend" Trump on his historic win in the presidential polls. The post was accompanied by photos of the two leaders holding hands at rallies in Gujarat and Texas during Trump's first term.

The post was quickly followed by a phone call, in which Trump told PM Modi that "he considers him and India a true friend". Trump also said that the "whole world loves" PM Modi, and he was a "magnificent man". Weeks ago, Trump called PM Modi a "total killer".



Donald Trump (L) and Narendra Modi at Hyderabad House in New Delhi in 2020 (AFP)



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Political pundits were quick to point out that the first calls Trump made post his victory were to PM Modi, Israel's Netanyahu and Saudi Arabia's Mohd Bin Salman and not to any of the NATO member nations.

"US-India ties could face a few bumps (mainly on the trade side) with Trump back in office, but their chemistry and political and ideological convergences will be a stabiliser," said Michael Kugelman, a South Asia policy expert.

WHAT TRUMP AS US PRESIDENT MEANS FOR INDIA-US TIES?

The exchange between PM Modi and Trump is being seen as a positive move, reminiscent of the Republican's first term when bilateral ties blossomed between India and the US, leading to the strengthening of their defence partnership. It also spares India from dealing with a relatively unknown individual like Kamala Harris, especially at a time when the Khalistani issue has become an irritant in Indo-US ties.

With the current US administration breathing fire on the alleged murder plot against Khalistani Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, India will hope that the US's emphasis on the case reduces as Trump takes over.

Under Trump and Modi, New Delhi and Washington had common stances on several issues.





Narendra Modi shakes hands with Donald Trump's wife Melania in Ahmedabad in 2020 (AFP)

Like Trump's first term, India will also be hopeful of the Republican's support on its fight against global terrorism as well as keeping adversaries like Pakistan in check. India will be hopeful of a similar hard-nosed approach towards Pakistan by the Trump 2.0 administration.

India will not forget how the first Trump administration suspended \$300 million in aid to Pakistan. The US had also designated Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist after the 2019 Pulwama terror attack.

Moreover, Trump's pledge to bring peace in the Middle East and Ukraine also aligns with PM Modi's "this is not an era of war" stance. "I am not going to start wars, I am going to stop wars... for four years we had no wars," Trump said in his victory speech.

EXPECT BOOST IN MILITARY TIES

However, the attention will mostly be on the military ties and expedition of existing defence deals at a time when India has looked towards Russia to meet its requirements. The Biden administration has on several occasions publicly



expressed its concern about India's engagement with Russia in the military and technology domains.

In his first term, Trump ensured that hurdles in defence cooperation with India were removed and signed a key agreement that gave New Delhi access to sensitive communication equipment and encrypted defence technologies from the US.

Trump's push also led to the [revival of the Quad](#), a strategic forum comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia. The move was seen as a counter to increasing Chinese assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.

The move was beneficial to India, coming amid its border standoff with China in Doklam. While the tensions between India and China have eased following the resolution of the four-year border standoff at LAC, New Delhi can expect robust US support if tensions flare up again.



Donald Trump and Narendra Modi attend 'Howdy, Modi!' rally in Houston, Texas, in 2019. (AFP)

BUMPS IN TRADE AND IMMIGRATION?



However, a "protectionist" Trump in the White House may impact India on the [issue of trade and immigration](#). Trump, who had made "America First" a cornerstone of

his campaign, has called India a "big abuser" in trade relations with the US. He has also promised to respond with retaliatory tariffs on exports from India.

India will also be mindful of the fact of how the H-1B visa denial rate increased from 6% in 2016 to 24% in 2018 during the first Trump regime, making it hard for IT professionals to get non-immigrant US work visas. It remains to be seen how India negotiates with Trump 2.0 over these tricky issues.

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