

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
5 on 45: On Modi's visit with Trump  
June 29, 2017

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PITA: You're listening to 5 on 45 from the Brookings Podcast Network; analysis and commentary by Brookings experts on today's news regarding the Trump Administration.

MADAN: I'm Tanvi Madan, director of the NEA project and fellow in the foreign policy program here Brookings. It's been a busy week for those of us on the India beat in Washington. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in town on June 25<sup>th</sup>. Then June 26 for his fifth visit to the U.S. in three years. So why was he here. First and foremost he was seeking to establish a relationship with President Trump. The two leaders had spoken three times on the phone since November but had never met. And for Mr. Modi who has invested a lot in the U.S. relationship. Developing a rapport with the new president is considered crucial to the future of the partnership. Second he wanted to make the case for the importance of India and the U.S. India partnership in terms of the President Trump would find attractive said Prime Minister Modi came wanting to shape presidents. Trump's view not just on India but on some key issues. For example counterterrorism and other area was the region both in terms of China but also to India's west Afghanistan and Pakistan for Prime Minister Modi came seeking clarity on not just these issues trying to counterterrorism Pakistan but he also wanted to get a better sense of the president himself the administration's strategic direction. And most particularly where India fits in. He wanted a sense of how much continued there would be with the Bush 43 and Obama administrations who had determined that the rise of India was an American interest and therefore worth supporting. Finally Prime Minister Modi was in Washington to engage with a number of stakeholders in the private sector and amongst the Indian diaspora which numbers about 4 million. Both of these stakeholders also help

shape perceptions of India in the Executive and Legislative branches and so that's all was considered important. When Indian prime ministers visit.

So how did the visit go in terms of the optics. They were quite good. The administration rolled out the red carpet for the Indian prime minister. They hosted him at a dinner and a working meeting at the White House. The dinner was the first that has been hosted by President Trump for any visiting leader at the White House. And both of the meeting as well as the dinner were attended not just by the vice president but a number of senior members of the cabinet as well as senior members of the National Security Council and the National Economic Council. President Trump and Prime Minister Modi also had some one on one time together which of course is very important these days always important but particularly in this case despite his recent criticism of India in a speech on the Paris agreement President Trump has generally expressed a positive view of India. And Prime Minister Modi even before President Trump ran for office he even visited India in 2014. Nonetheless there was some uncertainty about whether the kind of positive view or the negative view that he more recently expressed would hold. And I think the Indian team would go back reassured after this visit that the president does have a positive view at least rhetorically he is extremely full of praise of both the prime minister and India and he said that India had a true friend in the White House in his remarks. President Trump even on areas where there is friction between the two countries. Trade and Investment issues for example President Trump brought them up in a very subtle way in a humorous way rather than kind of being hectoring in any way. You all saw the first lady join a number of events as did Ivanka Trump, who expected

Prime Minister Modi's invitation to lead the U.S. delegation to a major summit for global entrepreneurs in India later this fall on the substance side.

There were some key signs of reassurance for both and continued for both the U.S. and India. The element of strategic continue. The joint statement highlighted the two countries stabilizing role in the Indian Ocean in Asia Asia-Pacific regions or what is now being called the Indo-Pacific signals a sign in a signal to China without mentioning it. The two sides also reiterated their support for freedom of navigation solving of disputes peacefully and in laying out kind of the standards that regional connectivity initiatives should follow. Mentioned transparency and responsibility in terms of debt financing. These were clear clear kind of responses to China's belt and road initiative which India has spoken out in some cases against quite vociferously. You also saw the president and the American administration appreciate and acknowledge India's support in Afghanistan with indications that India perhaps might do more there as well as in the kind of broader fight against ISIS in the future. You saw as well mentions of the continuing defense and security collaboration between the two countries including further potential further purchases of military equipment by India from the US. Also on the purchasing side and these are kind of the more transactional terms that usually don't get mad mentioned in U.S. India statements. You saw the potential for India to perhaps purchase LNG from the U.S. as well as further collaboration in other energy sectors including solar energy and perhaps even clean coal. So this was mentioned despite climate change being mentioned not being mentioned very directly. You did see mention of clean energy. I saw a section that was called increasing free and fair trade that did see the leaders not take on very directly but mention some of the issues that I suspect will be the points of friction between

the two countries which is on the trade and investment and potentially on the immigration side though that wasn't mentioned. And I think down the line these are the issues that the two sides are going to have to work on as they try to build a broader relationship. Just briefly on that and to kind of end this this podcast we saw the two sides kind of lay out how the relationship the trade and investment relationship has grown over time with both American companies investing in India and Indian companies investing here creating jobs in both countries but also the trade in India is for India. The U.S. has its largest trading partner but there is a trade deficit. They admit an American administration would also like more market access. The Indian side would as well but also access for its high skilled workers to the American Jobs field. And so I think you will see some of these issues and they will having this visit go well which he did has set a base for some of these tougher issues to be tackled as they come up as they will over the next few months.

But I think both sides will go away reassured somewhat that there are still elements of particularly strategic continued even as they continue to be some questions on future direction in terms of the administration's approach to China as well as Afghanistan as the policy review their concerns. Thank you.

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