

Modi-Trump Meet

The two leaders need to work out a new bilateral paradigm

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi heading to the US later this month for his first meeting with President Donald Trump, a critical moment is apparent in New Delhi-Washington relations. There's no denying that Trump has shaken up US foreign policy by challenging several established principles. Under an 'America First' framework, he has tried to reset America's ties with Nato, pulled out the US from the Paris Climate Accord, and torpedoed the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. Add to this how he takes to social media to speak his mind on diplomatic relations – as he recently did in criticising the trade deficit between



Germany and the US – and we have an American president with a highly personalised approach to foreign policy.

That ought to serve as a common ground with Modi who has also imparted his personal touch to Indian foreign policy. In fact, both leaders have a clear vision for their respective country and are willing to stake significant political capital to see this realised. Hence, the Modi-Trump meeting provides a good opportunity to update where each country stands in the other's foreign policy priority.

Continuity in India-US relations from the Modi-Obama years now looks impossible. This may not be a bad thing as Trump has already indicated a tough line on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and described India as a terror victim. But differences over issues such as H-1B visas to Indians and outsourcing need to be negotiated, perhaps by convincing how Indian interests are aligned to American industry interests. Just as China's President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have tried to establish a personal equation with Trump, so must Modi. These two leaders have the capacity to broker a new understanding for a win-win India-US partnership.