Challenges in Indo-US Bilateral Ties

What is the issue?

For India and the U.S., managing bilateral ties is linked to balancing nationalist, cultural and economic agendas.

WhatIndian expects from US administrations?

- Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump are two leaders who are rewriting the notion of national interest itself for instance, secularism was considered to be India's national interest until recently, and immigration and trade were considered to be in America's national interest.
- Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi are guided by nationalisms that have cultural and economic components.
- India wants investment, technology, arms, but does not want finished products (other than arms) or foreign ideas like Christianity, an open global market, the right to self-determination, human rights, Western strands of democracy coming through missionaries, international bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- This has been expressed through higher tariffs on imports and restrictions on global NGOs.
- India wants both disinterest in strategic matters and obsession arms acquisition need to be fulfilled by US administration.

What are the conflicts of opinion between the two nations?

- The growing presence of Indians in America is a source of conflict, Mr. Modi's politics involves boosting the global Hindu, but Indian Americans are cultural aliens to Mr. Trump's supporters, besides being seen to be their economic adversaries.
- The sustained squeeze on Indian guest workers entering the U.S., particularly through the H-1B visa programme, is a case in point.
- In contrast to India's demand US wants to sell only finished products at lower tariffs, and keep technology and capital within the borders of America protected.
- US approach to international ties gives precedence for commerce over the strategic, and workers over corporations.

- Professional strategists conventionally understood the U.S.'s international ties from the perspective of its multinational corporations.
- These corporations wanted cheap manufacturing in China and Southeast Asia and U.S. policy enabled that pursuit.
- Corporations wanted cheap labour from India by outsourcing work and importing workers into the U.S.
- But US administration does not want American work coming to India, or Indian workers going to America.
- Given a choice, US would be willing to sell arms to India without regard for issues such as regional stability that preoccupy professionals in the State Department.

How Indo-Sino relation affects Indo-US trade ties?

- India's trade surplus is tiny relative to the size of the American economy and its trade volumes.
- Presidents before Mr. Trump always privileged the strategic components of America's global ties over trade and commercial issues, India benefitted from that approach.
- When commerce becomes the only lens that the U.S. sees the world through, India and China look similar trying to extract benefits from it.
- When Mr. Trump sees India and China as two similar countries that are taking advantage of America with protectionism, weak intellectual property protection, and higher emissions under the climate treaty, the strategic reason for India-U.S. alignment, which is the menacing rise of China, gets weakened.
- In fact, the Wuhan summit, that marked a new thaw between India and China, had as its backdrop Mr. Trump's outburst against both countries on trade issues.

What are other expectations of India?

- US wants to end war in Afghanistan and another war that US appears to be itching to begin with Iran have major implications for India and its ties with the U.S.
- India wants America's continued engagement in Afghanistan and peace with Iran.
- Just as the U.S. was campaigning hard to have Masood Azhar designated as a global terrorist, it was also seeking Pakistan's help to persuade the Taliban for a deal in Afghanistan.
- The point being that India-U.S. cooperation on terrorism has several

components to be factored in and the Indian elation surrounding Mr. Trump’s relentless bluster against Pakistan needs to temper with some realism.

Source: The Hindu

