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OPINION

Trump and Modi strike an alliance against terrorism, North Korea

By [Shekhar Tiwari](#) and [Sue Ghosh Stricklett](#) | [Jul 22, 2017, 12:01 AM](#)



India joining America in applying new sanctions against North Korea is unprecedented. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Last month, when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met American President Donald Trump at the White House, the leaders of the world's two largest democracies re-established the first principle of an alliance between representative democracies: populism.

In their joint press conference remarks, President Trump aptly noted: "both American and the Indian constitutions begin with the same three very beautiful words: We the people. The Prime Minister and I both understand the crucial importance of those words, which helps to form the foundation of cooperation between our two countries. Relations between countries are strongest when they are devoted to the interests of the people we serve. And after our meetings today, I will say that the relationship between India and the United States has never been stronger, has never been better."

In formulating their nation's foreign policy, Trump and Modi concurred on the one essential point: through their elected representatives, the people must have a seat at the table. As such, America's national security interest is aligned with that of India and vice versa.

The priority interest of the American people and the Indian people is the same; the people expect their government to defend its sovereignty and protect its borders. Americans and Indians are equally aware that terrorism is the greatest imminent threat to their prosperity and their way of life.

Heinous acts of terror are no longer limited to the war zones in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, but have occurred with high frequency in the main streets of Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, New York, San Bernardino, and Orlando. Eradicating terrorism, wherever it may be, is critical to security, and security is a necessary prerequisite to trade and economic growth.

In a dramatic shift from India's past entrenched positions, Prime Minister Modi agreed to actively support President Trump's two priority concerns: Afghanistan and North Korea.

That India should join the US-led coalition in Afghanistan is unprecedented, and fills a void where Pakistan has been a less-than-reliable partner. Although India remains one of the largest foreign aid providers for Afghan reconstruction, a US-India coalition to stabilize Afghanistan never came together until now.

India joining America in applying new sanctions against North Korea is also unprecedented, since on this issue, South Korea, Japan, and China made up the diplomatic quartet. Overlooked is India's potency due to its billion-dollar trade relations. India is North Korea's second largest trading partner, after China.

Modi has emerged as a critical ally in America's war on terror. Moreover, he has effectively transitioned India from a South Asia regional player to a global leader facing a common global threat. By referencing the Indo-Pacific region as a theater for US-India partnership, Modi neatly pulls together the challenge presented by North Korea and Afghanistan as a shared strategic interest of the United States and India.

Solving these two problems together will deliver the one-two punch of rolling back Chinese hegemonic ambitions, as well as the critical Indian priority of Pakistan's cross-border adventurism into Afghanistan.

The game-changing significance of the recent Trump-Modi meeting is that discussions and the actions to follow, will reverberate globally. Of particular importance is that the fulcrum of the Free World has shifted from Europe to Asia. The two leaders who will likely determine the fate of the Free World are Donald Trump and Narendra Modi.

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