

## Allies, interrupted: on India-U.S. ties

There are enough signs that relations between India and the United States have suffered, with officials in both capitals now freely conceding that their interests are diverging. From the U.S. side, policy decisions by President Donald Trump to walk out of the multilateral nuclear deal with Iran, and the U.S. Congress's CAATSA law sanctioning Iran and Russia have set up an inevitable conflict. Mr. Trump's insistence on tough sanctions against all those continuing to engage with Iran and Russia limits India's options on energy security and defence procurement. During her visit last week, Nikki Haley, the U.S. envoy to the UN, told India to "[revise its relationship with Iran](#)"; this line is expected to be reiterated by U.S. interlocutors in the coming days. Added to this confrontation is the U.S.'s tough policy on trade tariffs, applied to ally and adversary alike, including India. For its part, the Narendra Modi government has taken a policy turn away from four years of a pro-U.S. tilt. Mr. Modi's speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue last month, in which he invoked the long-lapsed phrase "strategic autonomy", set at rest any doubt that there is a reset in his foreign policy. Since January, he has personally reached out to the Chinese and Russian Presidents in informal summits, and invited the Iranian President to Delhi. At variance with the U.S. position on limiting engagement with these very countries, India promised to raise oil imports from Iran this year, committed to far greater engagement on the Chabahar port project and oilfields in Iran, while negotiating a \$5.5 billion deal with Russia for the S-400 Triumph missile systems. These will trigger U.S. sanctions unless the two countries reach a compromise.

### The bilateral limits of hype: on India-U.S. relations

What is more troubling for bilateral ties is that despite the obvious problems, the political will to address these issues is now considerably diminished. In contrast to his meetings with the Russian and Chinese leaderships, Mr. Modi has had little contact with Mr. Trump since their meeting in Manila last November, which by all accounts did not go well. Now, the postponement of the Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers' "2+2" dialogue with their U.S. counterparts has denied the governments a chance to gather together the fraying bilateral threads. It is imperative that the dialogue be quickly rescheduled. While the U.S. has traditionally applied pressure on its allies to limit their engagement with countries it considers to be threats to the international order, the manner in which deadlines have been publicly issued by the State Department twice this week will only make its demands more difficult for India to even consider. India must now decide how best to deal with the ultimatums, with U.S. sanctions kicking in by November. The clock is ticking on the relationship.

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