Afghanistan – Trump plays by Obama's rules

Why in news?

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- Trump's Afghan strategy is being touted as radically different.
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- But the key points on being terror specific in mission and a critical approach to Pakistan's dilly-dallying has been typical of Obama's legacy.
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What are the reactions to the new policy?

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- The announcement of a military commitment in Afghanistan without a deadline has drawn goodwill from both US & Afghani establishments as this has been perceived as a guarantee on the security situation.
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- Also, the declaration that the U.S. would go after terrorists has been a huge change in the nature of military presence.
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- Thus, although the number of boots on the ground won't go up significantly, the sophistication & operations of the forces will, which will make an impact.
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What has been the approach to Pakistan?

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- In july, the US Defence Secretary accused Pakistan of not doing enough against the Haqqani network, and held back $50 million from reimbursements for logistical support it provided the US.
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- This kid of incentive cut is a continuance from the Obama days.
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- While the carrot & stick approach could pay off, foreign policy experts have noted that overdoing that could be counterproductive.
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- The US, like earlier continues to vouch for a Indo-Pak co-ordiantion on major regional issues.
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What are the policy’s expectations from India?

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- From 2012 onwards the Obama administration was open to New Delhi playing any role that it could agree with the Afghan government.
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- India has again been called upon to play a larger role in Afghanistan by the new policy.
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- The Trump administration would like India to help in working with Afghanistan’s domestic factions in widening and buttressing the political legitimacy of the current government, and helping it improve its governance.
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- While this has been largely a positive, the anxiety of Pakistan on increasing Indian presence in Afghan needs to be factored for advancing a successful mission.
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What are the overall implications?

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- While, there appears a strong continuity from the Obama era, Trump administration has spoken more clearly and directly about tricky issues concerning Afghanistan.
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- While the new policy was slated as a region specific policy, it is anything but regional.
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- With multiple countries having stakes in the South-Asian neighbourhood with often conflicting objectives, Afghanistan will continue to influence the larger geo-politcs.
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Source: The Hindu

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