India and US - Afghanistan issue

What is the issue?

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- U.S. National Security Adviser visited Afghanistan, Pakistan and India recently.
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- India will have to take a call on how to engage with the U.S. on Afghanistan.
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What are Trump’s recent policies?

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- Trump’s campaign promise of **“America First”** is reflected in recent policies.
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- He has backed away from his earlier tough position on declaring China a “currency manipulator” on the condition that China must rein in North Korea, particularly its plans for a nuclear test.
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- Trump stressed the need for NATO allies to “pay what they owe”, 2% of their GDP, for security.
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- Similar messages were pressed home to Japan, South Korea and Australia.
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- U.S. pays for 22% of the UN’s budget and almost 30% for UN peacekeeping and Trump termed this “unfair”.
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What is in it for India?

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- In this scenario the challenge for India is two-fold.

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- To decide if it is prepared to do to help the U.S. in security and peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan.
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- India will be asked to contribute in terms of providing defence equipment, to training soldiers in Afghanistan, as well as technical teams on the ground to repair and maintain military hardware.
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- Apart from Afghanistan, U.S. also wants India to move quickly on the other 'foundational agreements' i.e. the Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation as India completes formalities for the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement.
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- U.S. looks for Indian defence purchases, and "America First" clashes with "Make in India".
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- It is unclear whether India's demands for American heavy-lifting on the Nuclear Suppliers Group membership issue this June or on climate change financing will be taken very seriously.
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What should be done?

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- In Afghanistan India must bolster its bilateral delivery on defence assistance, rather than be co-opted in the U.S.'s plans which frequently change.
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Source: The Hindu

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