India – USA: Ambiguous Path Ahead

Why in news?

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The U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is visiting India this week.

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What is the tone of the summit?

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- The Secretary of State highlighted the growing mutual strategic priorities between the two big democracies.
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- He also notably criticised China's actions in the Indo-Pacific and the "Belt and Road Initiative" - BRI.
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- Areas of convergences like connectivity, trade & economics and counter-terrorism cooperation is expected to be the focus.
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- While sentiments look positive for India, it would be wise to wait for a clear policy from the US before celebrating.
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What are India's main concerns?

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- Trump has been very ambiguous in his foreign policy thus far.
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- The contradiction is particularly significant for India, as Trump's South Aisa doctrine is particularly very unclear.
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- **Pakistan -** Despite severely censoring Pakistan for supporting terrorism,

U.S. rejoined the Pakistani-led Quadrilateral Coordination Group along with Afghanistan and China.
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- Also, Washington has not condemned the Pakistan government’s decision to drop terrorism charges against LeT Chief Hafiz Saeed.
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- **Iran -** U.S. is expected to increase sanctions on Iran, as it has recently blamed it for supporting terrorism.
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- This might make trading with Iran very hard due to various constrains like banking.
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- Lack of trade may hence reduce Iran’s interest in Chabahar port, thereby impacting India’s connectivity plans for Afghanistan and Central Asia.
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- Also, India would be under pressure to reduce oil imports from Iran and give up future investment plans in Iran.
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What else does the trip hold?

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- Delhi will host Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on the same day that Mr. Tillerson arrives which would be perceived as trilateral.
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- As Mr. Tillerson will travel to Delhi from Islamabad, he will also carry the Pakistan perspective - which calls for more caution.
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- In the absence of a clearer path for the US, India should stay vigilant from being drawn into the larger strategic designs.
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Source: The Hindu

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