

## Trump links India's Afghan role to trade surplus

President Donald Trump, who announced his new Afghan strategy on Monday night, linked a proposal for India playing a bigger role in the war-torn country to its trade surplus with the United States.

"We appreciate India's important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, but India makes billions of dollars in trade with the United States, and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development," he said, echoing similar demands that he had made on South Korea, Japan and Germany, some of the closet allies of the U.S. India is the ninth biggest trading partner of the U.S. and India had a trade surplus of around \$26 billion with the U.S. in goods trade alone last year.

By inviting India to be a partner in Afghanistan, Mr. Trump has entirely overruled Pakistan's position that India's involvement to its west is part of the problem.

### Nuclear flashpoint

The President, who repeatedly took potshots at his predecessor, Barack Obama, without naming him, however, appeared to follow the previous administration's understanding of South Asia as a nuclear flash point, where there is also a risk of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the hands of Islamist terrorists.

"The threat is worse because Pakistan and India are two nuclear-armed states whose tense relations threaten to spiral into conflict," he said. "...and we must prevent nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the hands of terrorists and being used against us," he said.

Defense Secretary James Mattis had recently said America was "not winning" in Afghanistan. The President said America will fight the war to victory and defined victory in terms similar to his predecessors — to prevent a terrorist attack originating from the region, and to politically stabilise Afghanistan. In an effort to differentiate his policy from his two predecessors, George W. Bush and Mr. Obama, who oversaw this war earlier, Mr. Trump said: "We are not nation-building again. We are killing terrorists." The President called his new policy "Principled Realism."

### Reverse Taliban gains

The new strategy in Afghanistan, which seeks troops increase in the country, is an effort to reverse the gains made by the Taliban in the last year or so. Once the Afghan government regains the upper hand, the U.S. will seek a political settlement, the President said. "Someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban in Afghanistan, but nobody knows if or when that will ever happen," said Mr. Trump.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson explained the new U.S policy as an effort to force the Taliban to negotiation. "Our new strategy breaks from previous approaches that set artificial calendar-based deadlines. We are making clear to the Taliban that they will not win on the battlefield. The Taliban has a path to peace and political legitimacy through a negotiated political settlement to end the war," he said in a statement after the President's speech.

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