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A Dangerous Game in the Arctic

Trump's Demands Could Derail Progress on Allied Defense

HEATHER A. CONLEY

July 17, 2026



HEATHER A. CONLEY is a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a Senior Advisor at Evenflow Macro. From 2001 to 2005, she was U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian

Context US proposal to acquire Greenland and growing Russian and Chinese activities have transformed the Arctic into a major geopolitical theatre.

Facts

■ Canada committed nearly \$57 billion to strengthen Arctic defence, NORAD, military infrastructure & surveillance.

■ China operates 5 icebreakers & is actively mapping the Arctic seabed for future strategic and mineral interests.

Analytical Crux

The arctic has evolved from a peripheral region into a strategic frontier shaped by climate change, resource competition and great-power rivalry. US pressure on Greenland & Canada risks creating distrust within the alliance precisely when coordinated deterrence against Russia and China is most needed. Alliance cohesion, burden-sharing & institutional trust remain as important as military capabilities in preserving regional security and maintaining the emerging global strategic balance.

Verbatim Quotes

"Arctic security is too critical for the US to afford to exclude any of its allies."

- Heather A. Conley

India's efforts to address the development needs of Afghans



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Expanding Cooperation through Agriculture: India's Efforts to Address the Development Needs of Afghans

Puspa Kumari, Research Assistant, VIF

July 16, 2026 Views: 312 Comments: 0

The Afghan Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Attaullah Omari paid an official visit to Delhi from 7-12 July 2026. This visit was significant because it shifted the conversation on India-Afghan cooperation from mere diplomatic engagement to a more practical development approach in areas such as agriculture, water management, food security, technical research, and institutional cooperation that directly addresses the needs of Afghans. It was fourth such visit by an Afghan minister since the Taliban took power in Kabul in August 2021. The importance lies not in the number of visits but in the substance of the discussion.

Author



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Vanuatu-Australia
Nakamal
Agreement:
Strategic
Competition i
The Nakamal
agreement, signed
on June 29 2026,

Context

Agriculture has emerged as India's most practical avenue of engagement with Afghanistan after the Taliban's return, allowing India to deepen developmental cooperation.

Facts

Around 17.4 million Afghans face food insecurity, while 4.7 million remain in IPC Phase-4 (Emergency).

India has invested over \$3 billion in more than 500 development projects across Afghanistan.

Analytical Crux

India's Afghanistan policy increasingly reflects functional engagement without political recognition. By focusing on irrigation, agricultural research, food security & institutional capacity building, India continues to maintain strategic relevance while avoiding legitimising the Taliban regime. Agricultural cooperation addresses Afghanistan's immediate livelihood crisis caused by drought, food insecurity and the opium ban, while reinforcing India's image as a responsible development partner.

Verbatim Quotes

"For India, it is not about viewing Afghanistan only through instability and security apparatus."

- Puspita Kumari

Much more than Melbourne meets Modi

Much more than 'Melbourne meets Modi'

In terms of rock star performances by foreign leaders, it would be hard to beat Prime Minister Narendra Modi's magnetic engagement with a Melbourne crowd in Australia in the second week of July. As one of those in the crowd, I can attest that the audience revelled in Mr. Modi's energy, and the messages of aspiration for the diaspora and for the Australia-India partnership.

Mr. Modi's visit to Australia took place from July 8 to 10. But this visit was a lot more than a rock star performance. It opened new chapters in the India-Australia story – in investment, strategic trust, culture, sports and people.

Beyond symbolic diplomacy

A short call of the board is warranted. The leaders, Mr. Modi and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese agreed on: a new Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation that deepens our work together as a force for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific; a new Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains that strengthens our respective cyber capabilities, improves regional and global cyber resilience, and boosts our industrial and business linkages; a sports playbook that leverages Australia's expertise in major sporting events, as India seeks to demonstrate its global leadership by hosting the Commonwealth Games and bidding for the Olympic and Paralympic Games; a statement on energy security that commits Australia and India to more resilient energy supply chains, while making possible Australian uranium exports to India for peaceful purposes, and a Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap that charts the way forward for Australia and India to expand



Philip Green

Australia's High Commissioner to India

The 'Melbourne momentum' is opening new chapters in security, business, education and culture

cooperation on maritime security in the vast Indian Ocean that lies between our shores.

Business, education, cricket

That is a lot for a single visit. And business leaders chipped in – Australia's largest pension fund, Australian Super, decided to invest half a billion dollars (that is ₹3,360 crore) in India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited. That is on top of Australia's leading hyperscalers committing to build tens of billions of dollars in data centres across India.

Our education sectors reminded us that eight Australian universities have now undertaken to open foreign branch campuses in India, including the University of New South Wales (UNSW), which is a global top 20 university. When its campus opens later this year, UNSW will be the highest-ranking university in India.

And a big next step in our relationship was also foreshadowed, with the plans for an annual showcase of the best of Australian culture and business under the banner "G'Day - Namaste". G'Day - Namaste will coincide with the Australian Big Bash League playing its first game (cricket) on foreign soil in December this year.

To me, this rich set of outcomes represents more than a fair bit of work in preparation for the visit. It shows that there is a lot more headroom to deepen and expand our collaboration. That is because of three underlying drivers that are impelling our partnership forward: The fact that we are reliable partners at a time when our region, and the world more broadly, is in flux, and when each of us needs to find deeper international connections to safeguard our interests; the fact that we have highly complementary economies – Australia's

strengths in energy, mining, and education and skills fit neatly with India's rapidly growing manufacturing industry, and the fact that the Indian diaspora in Australia – Australia's fastest-growing – is a source of pride and dynamism for our two governments.

Leadership drives partnership

Relationships grow when the objective conditions are fertile. They flourish when each nation sees in the other, solutions to some of its problems, and pathways to maximise their opportunities. That is where Australia and India are.

They also flourish when they have leadership with a shared vision and ambition for the relationship.

That shared ambition was much on display between Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Anthony Albanese. Stability and continuity are on the side of our leaders too, with each focused on fixing long-term problems and seizing opportunities.

The two leaders have a deep respect and admiration for each other.

The genuine warmth between our Prime Ministers was on unmistakable display over two days in Melbourne – from their banter about cricket in quiet moments, to their attentive consideration of each other's viewpoints, to the bear-hugs that caught the attention of the cameras.

The visit is a vivid demonstration of what a positive place we find ourselves in, in the India-Australia partnership. Not all bilateral relationships have that just now, so we should celebrate it. Celebrate it, and recommit ourselves to maximising the opportunities of a special moment of alignment of interests.

Context

India - Australia relations are now driven by long-term strategic convergence across defence, technology, energy, education & maritime security.

Facts



India and Australia signed a Declaration on Defence & Security cooperation and a Maritime Security collaboration roadmap.



Australia agreed to facilitate uranium exports for India's peaceful nuclear programme, strengthening India's energy security.

Analytical Crux

The India - Australia partnership has matured into a comprehensive strategic relationship founded on shared geopolitical interests rather than temporary political goodwill. Cooperation now spans defence, cyber security, critical technologies, maritime security, education and resilient supply chains.

Australian uranium exports further diversify India's clean energy options and strengthen bilateral trust. The partnership exemplifies strategic alignment without a formal military alliance.

Verbatim Quotes

"Relationships grow when the objective conditions are fertile."

"Not all bilateral relationships have that just now, so we should celebrate it."

- Philip Green

PSIR 2025, Paper II: India maintains strong ties with countries that will assure a free and open Indo-Pacific and guarantee greater connectivity with rest of the world. Analyze.

- **PSIR 2025, Paper II:** Historical ties between India and Japan grew into a 'special strategic and global partnership'. Comment.
- **PSIR 2024, Paper II:** Discuss the rationale behind replacing the 'Asia-Pacific' strategy with the new term 'Indo-Pacific' strategy.
- **GS 2024 Paper II:** Discuss the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of Maldives for India with a focus on global trade and energy flows. Further also discuss how this relationship affects India's maritime security and regional stability amidst international competition?"
- **GS 2023, Paper II:** Sea is an important Component of the Cosmos.' Discuss in the light of the above statement the role of the IMO (International Maritime Organization) in protecting environment and enhancing maritime safety and security.



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