

US elite rolls out red carpet for Indian PM Modi

Keith Jones
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US President Barack Obama kicked off a two-day summit meeting with Narendra Modi yesterday by hosting a private White House dinner for India's prime minister.

Today, Modi is to have further meetings with Obama and the top officials in his administration, including Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State John Kerry, and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel as part of what the *New York Times* has called a "Champagne and roses" attempt to flatter and woo India's new prime minister.

The Obama administration and the US military-security establishment have made no secret of the fact that they see Modi's visit as a golden opportunity to "reset" Indo-US ties, so as to advance their core objective of building up India as a military-strategic and economic counterweight to China and otherwise harnessing New Delhi to US imperialism's global strategic agenda.

Speaking to reporters last Friday, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest described the summit as a means of deepening the "US-India strategy partnership ... a partnership that is highly valued by this country and by this White House." In not for attribution remarks, another administration official told the *Times*, "We think this will be a pivotal moment and an opportunity for us to define how we can work together."

Writing in the Council on Foreign Relations' premier publication, *Foreign Affairs*, former US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns was somewhat more frank about the aggressive agenda that lies behind the US's courting of India. "In the century ahead," asserts Burns, "US strategic interests will align more closely with India's than they will with those of any other continental power in Asia.... The Obama administration should therefore use its remaining two years to make India a greater priority, especially since the country has not yet figured prominently in the rebalancing of US attention and resources" to Asia "as part of the so-called pivot."

Under George W. Bush, the US and India forged a

"global strategic" partnership. On coming to office, Obama was quick to reiterate the US's eagerness to assist India's elite in realizing its great power ambitions. But recent years have seen increasing frictions between Washington and New Delhi.

India has repeatedly bowed to US demands, especially as regards Washington's efforts to bully and economically cripple Iran, and India's military has become increasingly integrated with that of the US. America is now India's largest foreign supplier of weapons and weapons systems, and in recent years no country's military has staged more joint exercises with the Pentagon than India's.

Nonetheless, the Obama administration became increasingly miffed with India's previous Congress Party-led government over both strategic and economic issues. To Washington's chagrin, the Congress-led coalition government balked at expanding trilateral and quadrilateral military-security cooperation with Japan and Australia, Washington's other key strategic allies in the "pivot to Asia"—i.e., the drive to isolate and encircle China.

Washington and US big business have also complained that India is not moving quickly enough in eliminating its remaining barriers to foreign investment, nor subscribed to US patents legislation. They have also denounced the civilian nuclear liability law India adopted after Washington arranged for the removal of the international sanctions on India's civilian nuclear program, because it could result in a US company facing sizable penalties were it proven at fault for a catastrophic nuclear accident.

The head of India's traditional pro-US, right-wing party, the Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Modi has already signaled he is anxious to pursue enhanced relations with the US and its key partners in the Indo-Pacific region

Modi has announced that his government, unlike its

predecessor, is ready to take up the Obama administration's offer for India to join with the Pentagon and US arms manufactures in the co-development and co-production of new weapon systems.

Several days prior to Modi's visit, an advance team of the Indian Defence Ministry arrived in Washington, reportedly with the aim of finalizing details for Indo-US joint production of the third generation Javelin anti-tank missile.

US officials have stressed such co-production agreements—and there are several others currently under consideration—are open only to the US's closest and most trusted strategic partners.

Modi is seeking to cast his enthusiasm for New Delhi joining such co-production deals in Indian nationalist terms, arguing they will further his government's goal of making India autonomous in weapons manufacture and ultimately a major arms-exporter.

The reality is weapons co-production would be a major step toward integrating India with the US military-security apparatus, furthering Washington's goal of Indo-US military "interoperability" and, just as importantly, making New Delhi ever more militarily dependent on the US.

Modi has also indicated he has few if any scruples about India participating in regular trilateral and quadrilateral initiatives with the US, Japan and Australia. Increased Indo-US-Japanese cooperation is an important part of the "special strategic partnership" Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Abe announced last month when India's prime minister made Japan the site of his first bilateral foreign visit beyond South Asia.

The US is also pressing India to become more active in Southeast Asia and the South China Sea, where Washington has been encouraging Vietnam, the Philippines and other states to aggressively pursue their territorial claims against China. Earlier this month, India and Vietnam signed agreements to increase their military cooperation and Hanoi offered state-owned Indian oil firms further rights to explore in offshore areas also claimed by China.

According to the White House, Modi will discuss with Obama and his top aides India's continuing support for Afghanistan's US-installed government and developments in the Middle East, where the US has launched a new war under the guise of fighting Islamic extremism. On Sunday, Modi met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, the first meeting between an Indian prime

minister and his Israeli counterpart in 11 years.

For Modi, a key objective of his US visit is to drum up investment to buoy India's flagging economy. India's growth rate fell sharply after 2011, expanding by less than 5 percent in the last two fiscal years. Just before leaving for the US, Modi launched a "Made in India" campaign aimed at promoting India as an alternative low-wage manufacturing hub to China.

Modi is holding a raft of meetings with business leaders during his US trip. On Monday, he had an hour-long breakfast meeting with 11 CEOs, including those of Pepsi, Citicorp, and Google. Later he had one-on-one meetings with six other CEOs, among them the heads of Goldman Sachs, BlackRock, major-arms manufacture Boeing, and General Electric (GE). According to the Kolkata-based *Telegraph*, Modi was intending to signal to GE CEO Jeffrey Immelt that India is now ready to discuss modifications to its nuclear liability law. GE is a major player in the nuclear industry.

The Indian and US corporate media are touting the Modi-Obama summit with noxious blather about their respectively heading the world's two most populous "democracies."

Modi, a Hindu supremacist infamous for his role in the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim pogrom and in defending summary executions (so-called encounter killings), is a fitting representative of the democratic bonafides of India's ruling elite.

Indeed, for almost a decade ending only earlier this year, the US government refused to give Modi a visa to visit the US, so conspicuous was his role in instigating the 2002 pogrom and protecting those who directly carried it out.

As for Obama, he has overseen a vast expansion of state surveillance, arrogated the power to order the summary execution of US citizens, and trashed international law, asserting the US's untrammled right to subvert and invade any country it pleases.



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