

# Brazilian President Bolsonaro guest of honor at India's Republic Day

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Brazil's fascistic president, Jair Bolsonaro, was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guest of honor at India's annual January 26 Republic Day parade, providing another vivid demonstration to the world of the extreme right-wing character of his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government.

Bolsonaro arrived in India on Friday with a delegation of ministers and businessmen, among them the CEOs of 10 Brazilian arms manufacturers. The governments of Brazil and India promoted Bolsonaro's visit as an opportunity to greatly expand economic and geo-political ties and forge a bilateral strategic partnership. On the eve of the Republic Day celebrations, Modi and Bolsonaro signed 15 bilateral agreements covering trade, defense and other areas.

In a joint statement, the governments affirmed their intention to double trade between the two countries over a period of three years, from the current US\$7 billion to US\$15 billion annually. One of the areas of cooperation mentioned is the energy sector, with proposed partnerships in ethanol production and a hike in Indian imports of Brazilian oil. According to economic analysts, this would help India meet Washington's demand that it find a replacement for the oil it currently imports from Venezuela.

In regards to military ties, the Brazilian government wants to consolidate its position as an arms exporter to India, the world's second-largest foreign purchaser of weapons and weapon-systems. From practically non-existent exports today, Brazil has the goal of reaching US\$1 billion in arms sales to India in five years.

The trip saw New Delhi and Brasilia agree to set up a Joint Working Commission on Defence Industrial Cooperation. It also provided a forum for negotiations between executives of the Brazilian arms manufacturer Taurus and the steelmaker Jindal and its armaments subsidiary, Jindal Defence. On Monday, those companies

announced a joint venture to build a small-arms manufacturing facility in India. The venture fits in with the "Make in India" policy of Modi, which encourages both the replacement of imported products with ones manufactured domestically, and India's emergence as an alternative global production-chain hub to China.

The government of India is expected to acquire 500 million Taurus engineered rifles over the next five years. As a result of Monday's announcement, Taurus shares shot up on the Brazilian Stock Exchange.

Several other deals are reportedly in the works, including a possible sale to the Indian Air Force of an advanced military transport plane developed by the Brazil-based aerospace giant Embraer.

Eduardo Bolsonaro, the Brazilian president's son and a federal legislator, was part of the delegation to India, and reportedly very active in promoting Brazil as a global center for weapons production. Toward this end, he is pressing for the elimination of bureaucratic impediments to foreign arms manufacturers setting up shop in Brazil, calculating that they will be enticed by a workforce subjected to ever-increasing exploitation.

Despite the fanfare over the multiple agreements signed by Modi and Bolsonaro, the two governments proved unable to resolve a protracted trade dispute over India's sugar exports, which Brazil along with Australia and Guatemala have charged are glutting the world market thanks to a government subsidy regime. The World Trade Organization launched a formal investigation into the complaints last year. Bolsonaro's visit to India sparked protests by Indian sugar farmers, who charged that any deal with Brazil would be at their expense.

India and Brazil constitute the world's two largest so-called "emerging" economies after China, and Washington is seeking to cultivate relations with both countries' right-wing governments in an attempt to develop a counterweight to Beijing's growing influence.

Under Modi, India has opened its bases and ports to routine use by US warplanes and warships, parroted Washington's provocative line on the South China Sea, and formed an incipient NATO-style military-strategic alliance with the US and its principal Asia-Pacific allies, Japan and Australia—"the Quad."

Bolsonaro himself campaigned on an anti-Chinese platform and has expressed the aim of lessening the dependence of Brazil's economy on China. The reality, however, is that Brazilian-Indian bilateral trade would amount to barely one-tenth of that between Brazil and China even if the goals announced between the two leaders over the weekend were to be achieved.

The meeting between Modi and Bolsonaro highlighted their common support for the most reactionary policies on the global stage. They dedicated a long passage of their joint declaration to what they called "combating international terrorism." They announced their commitment to forging a "stronger international partnership to contain terrorism and violent extremism, including through greater sharing of intelligence," and "to cooperate against specific terrorist threats identified by each country."

This signaled, on the one hand, their alignment with the foreign policy of US imperialism, which justifies its wars of aggression and war crimes like this month's assassination of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani in the name of the fight against terrorism. On the other hand, both governments claim the right to violently repress any form of social opposition, which can be freely "identified by each country" as a "terrorist threat."

This is not speculation. While Bolsonaro calls social protests terrorist acts and the Brazilian Congress advances laws to frame demonstrators under the Terrorism Act, the Indian government has imposed a stage of siege on Kashmir and its 13 million people under the pretext of combating terrorism, and has framed up activists on terrorism charges under India's Unlawful Activities Prevention.

In the current campaign for the assembly election in the Delhi National Capital Territory, the site of the Jan. 26 Republic Day parade, prominent BJP politicians have repeatedly led chants of "Shoot the traitors," a reference to those protesting the Modi government's recently introduced anti-Muslim Citizenship Amendment Act.

During their summit meeting, Modi spared no praise for Bolsonaro, whom he called a "dear friend." The government decorated the streets of New Delhi with posters bearing the face of Brazil's president. Modi

insisted that the two countries are realizing "a strategic partnership based on a similar ideology and similar values." This "ideology" and these "values" consist of the extreme right-wing nationalist and fascistic policies pursued by both presidents.

Modi—a lifelong member of the Hindu fascist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—certainly identifies with Bolsonaro's avid defense of the bloody military dictatorship that ruled Brazil for over 20 years. Underscoring their political affinity, Bolsonaro, when asked if he was aware of Modi's reputation as a threat to Indian democracy, cynically replied, "They say I am also a threat to democracy."

Bolsonaro was forced to cancel a visit to the US last year in the face of threatened protests, and is considered toxic in much of Europe. But India was a country where he could count on the government and the corporate media not raising questions about his government's assault on freedom of the press and other core democratic rights.

The political similarities between the heads of government of countries with such different historical backgrounds reflect the common concerns of the Indian and Brazilian ruling classes, both of which wallow in unprecedented wealth amid mass poverty and societal dysfunction, and fear, above all, mounting social opposition from the working class. In both countries, workers are subjected to the same fundamental problems: mass unemployment, worsening living and working conditions, government cuts and the betrayals carried out by trade unions and phony workers' (in India, Stalinist Communist) parties that posture as "left" while imposing the dictates of big business.

The common conditions of exploitation of workers are deeply rooted in the process of globalization of capitalist production. At the same time, they pose immense revolutionary possibilities for unifying political demands and globally coordinating workers' struggles around the world.



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