

US-NATO war threats against Russia intensify war dangers facing India

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31 January 2022

Escalating US-NATO war threats against Russia on the false pretext of defending Ukraine from an imminent Russian invasion have exposed the reactionary role of the Indian bourgeoisie.

The Ukrainian government's public denials of US allegations that a Russian invasion is imminent has exposed the NATO powers' case for a military build-up as a blatant fraud. While New Delhi clumsily tries to balance between its military-strategic partnership with Washington and its longstanding military ties to Moscow, Washington and its NATO allies are driving towards a global military confrontation with Russia.

India's strategic partnership with the US has developed over the last two decades under successive governments led by both the ruling Hindu-supremacist Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) and the Congress. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP government, India has become a front-line state of the US war drive against China. However, Washington is pressing India to line up with it not only against China but also against Russia.

While New Delhi enthusiastically lined up with Washington against China, as it has a decades-long rivalry with China and its main South Asian ally, Pakistan, it has resisted growing US demands that it break ties with Russia. Indeed, for decades, starting in the time of the Soviet Union, New Delhi had close economic, political and military ties with Moscow. The US-India partnership developed rapidly, on the other hand, after the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the Soviet Union.

As US war threats against Russia over Ukraine intensified, Washington's pressure on India to align with its war drive against Moscow has also increased.

In a telephone conversation held with Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on January 19, US

Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman discussed "Russia's concerning military build-up on Ukraine's borders," according to a US State Department statement.

Indicating the dilemma confronting India, the Modi government has not made any clear official statement on talks or its attitude towards US accusations against Russia and associated war preparations. Instead, India kept silent on the issue for weeks. Indian officials cited by the media said that "with key strategic partners on both sides, any hasty moves may shrink the already tight diplomatic space New Delhi has."

When total silence became untenable, Indian officials cautiously remarked on the issue on January 28. Arindram Bagchi, spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, said in a media briefing: "We have been closely following the developments relating to Ukraine, including ongoing high-level discussions between Russia and the US. ... We call for a peaceful resolution of the situation through sustained diplomatic efforts for long-term peace and stability in the region and beyond."

Indian calls for "peaceful resolution" of US-Russia conflict do not constitute a peace policy from New Delhi. Rather, it sees stepped-up tensions between Washington and Moscow, and eruption of military conflict between them, as cutting across its own geopolitical interests and war plans in the region.

Moreover, a US military intervention against Russia exploiting Ukraine as a pretext risks drawing China into the conflict on Russia's side. Indicating the discussions in China's political establishment, China's *Global Times*, which is known to be close to the Chinese army, carried an opinion piece by its former editor, Hu Xijin, titled, "If US provoked China or Russia, the other won't be indifferent." The article

openly warned Washington that its moves for “strategically squeezing China and Russia at the same time” will push “China and Russia together to strike back.”

A conflict between the NATO alliance and Russia in Europe would rapidly spread to Asia. India and China have been in a tense military stand-off along their border known as Line of Actual Control (LAC) since mid-2020, and opposes any further consolidation of the existing partnership between China and one of India’s traditional strategic partners, Russia.

While India has developed its military-strategic partnership with the US to a much higher level, signing three foundational agreements, including securing US military access to Indian air and sea ports, and having the designation of “major defence partner” from the US, it still largely depends on Russian military supplies. According to a study by the Stimson Center, Russia remains the origin of over almost 86 percent of military equipment used by India. India signed a major agreement in October 2018 to purchase five S-400 air defence systems from Russia.

The US has been raising concerns over India’s moves to purchase the S-400 systems from Russia, with the possibility of invoking US sanctions under CAATSA (Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act). Although the US earlier hinted that India might get an exception from sanctions for the S-400 deal, US officials have now again raised the possibility of the S-400 deal coming under sanctions they plan to impose on Russia.

At his daily press briefing last Thursday, US State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said, “I think it [India’s procurement of S-400s] shines a spotlight on the destabilising role that Russia is playing not only in the region but potentially beyond as well. ... When it comes to CAATSA sanctions, you’ve heard me say before, we haven’t made a determination with regard to this transaction, but it’s something we continue to discuss with the government of India given the risk of sanctions for this particular transaction under CAATSA.”

This increasing pressure underscores one central point. Whatever reluctance New Delhi has had in lining up with Washington against Moscow, the Modi government’s moves to turn India into a front-line state against China have clearly strengthened Washington’s

hand in its preparation for war with Russia.

Moreover, deliberate official policies of mass infection in the COVID-19 pandemic, which have led to millions of deaths in the NATO countries and in India, have massively intensified internal class tensions and accelerated the imperialist powers’ resort to war hysteria to direct mounting social tensions outwards.

This underscores the significance of the campaign launched by the International Committee of the Fourth International to build an anti-war movement of the international working class based on international socialism, and the urgency of mobilizing the working class in South Asia in such a movement with their class brothers and sisters globally.



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