

India strengthening anti-China alliance with US as Washington wages war on Russia

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Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made a 10-day visit to the US from September 18 to 28. While Jaishankar led the Indian delegation at the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the principal purpose of his visit was to bolster the Indo-US military-strategic partnership.

Above all, New Delhi wanted to reassure the Biden administration that whatever their differences over the US-NATO war against Russia, India is a staunch ally of US imperialism in the Indo-Pacific and intends to integrate itself still more fully in Washington's reckless and ever-more provocative military-strategic offensive against China.

India has thus far refused to cede to US demands it condemn Moscow, which allowed itself to be goaded by the western imperialist powers into invading Ukraine, as the "aggressor" and impose punishing economic sanctions on Russia.

Speaking at a joint press conference with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the last day of his visit, Jaishankar said he was "very bullish" about the Indo-US alliance. He called it "a very positive experience ... with a lot of promise" to jointly "shape the direction of the world." Blinken, for his part, termed the Indo-US "partnership" "one of the most consequential in the world." In his remarks, the US Secretary of State repeatedly stressed the importance of the Quad—the quasi-military alliance of the US, its principal Asia-Pacific allies, Japan and Australia, and India.

With the full support of the Indian bourgeoisie and virtually the entire political establishment, India's far-right Narendra Modi-led government is doubling down on its military-strategic partnership with US imperialism even as Washington demonstrates that it is ready to risk triggering nuclear war to prevail over Moscow and China. In the case of Russia, the Biden administration has responded to Russian President Vladimir Putin's warnings that Moscow could be forced to resort to using nuclear weapons, by stepping up its already massive military support for Ukraine. Even as it does so, Washington is intensifying its "full-court" press against China, embargoing the sale of advanced computer technology to China and announcing plans to massively arm Taiwan and transform it into a vast US military depot.

These developments point to the criminal character of the Indian ruling class. Well aware that at the beginning of this century the CIA and various US military-strategic think tanks had labelled India the world's most "important swing state" in global geopolitics, New Delhi forged ever closer ties with Washington as it mounted a drive for global hegemony through wars across the

Middle East and Central Asia and now unbridled strategic competition with Russia and China.

The Indian bourgeoisie has thus encouraged US imperialism to act ever more aggressively and recklessly around the world, but especially in its war drive against Beijing. If not stopped through the revolutionary intervention of the international working class, this drive will culminate in a global conflagration that will inevitably engulf South Asia and threaten all of humanity.

In addition to dramatically increasing bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral ties with the US, Japan and Australia during the two and half years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Modi government has used the border dispute with China that flared up in May 2020 to fan hostility to Beijing and legitimize India's working ever more closely with Washington to counter Chinese influence in South Asia and across the Indian Ocean region.

India, which like China, is now preparing to keep tens of thousands of troops, tanks and warplanes forward deployed along their disputed Himalayan border for a third successive winter, has welcomed Washington's very obtrusive attempts to insert itself in the border conflict. This includes repeatedly tying the Indo-China border tensions to the South China Sea dispute as examples of Beijing's aggression and refusal to adhere to the "international world order."

Earlier this week, the Indian and US militaries began a two-week training exercise, *Yudh Abhyas* (War Practice), with the express aim of practicing for high-altitude conflict and in an area located less than 100 kilometers from the Line of Actual Control (i.e., the disputed India-China border) in Auli in the northern state of Uttarakhand. Not surprisingly, Beijing has denounced the exercise as a provocation.

Underscoring the breadth of Indo-US cooperation against China, Jaishankar participated during his US visit in the first-ever US-Pacific Island Country Summit. The summit was part of Washington's belligerent response to growing Chinese economic and strategic influence in the South China Sea—the site of some of World War Two's biggest naval battles. The US and Australia have issued a series of threats in recent months against the government of the tiny Solomon Islands for defying their wishes and signing a security pact with Beijing of the type Washington endeavours to forge with governments the world over.

India's participation in the US-Pacific Island Country Summit marks a further step in India's integration into the wider US strategy against China. India's relations with some of the Pacific

Island countries, such as Fiji, which has a large ethnic Indian population, are stronger than that of the US. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Fiji in November 2014. Jaishankar also met Papua New Guinea foreign minister Justin Tkatchenko in Washington to discuss ongoing cooperation and how it can be developed. Welcoming the steps taken by India, Derek Grossman, a national security analyst at the Rand Corporation, which has close connections with the US security establishment, said this is how “great powers think and act: globally.”

That said, there are numerous tensions in the Indo-US alliance, as the Indian ruling class scrambles to assert its predatory interests under conditions of an ever deepening systemic global capitalist crisis, and Washington ruthlessly seeks to use its military might and still dominant position in the world financial system to arrest the erosion in its world position.

As reported by the *Hindu* on September 30, the US Treasury Department has imposed sanctions against a Mumbai-based petrochemical company, accused of selling Iranian petroleum products. Washington accuses Tib Petrochemical Private Limited of purchasing millions of dollars’ worth of petrochemical products for “onward shipments to China.” This is the first Indian company to face such a ban since the US withdrew from the Iran nuclear accord in 2018 and unilaterally imposed global economic sanctions against Iran that are tantamount to war.

New Delhi, meanwhile, is piqued by Washington’s efforts to restore its frayed relations with India’s arch-rival, Pakistan. During his US visit, Jaishankar voiced India’s displeasure at Washington’s recent approval of the sale of \$450 million worth of military equipment to Pakistan to help refurbish its F-16 fighter jet fleet. The Indian foreign minister declared that the US relationship with Pakistan, its principal regional partner throughout the Cold War, has “not served” either of the two countries, and bluntly rejected Washington’s claim that the F-16s will be used to “fight terrorism,” saying that you are “not fooling anybody.”

Defending the US decision to renew its defence ties with Pakistan while promoting India as its major military-strategic partner in South Asia, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price told reporters that Washington looks to both India and Pakistan “as partners, because we do have in many cases shared values.” Blinken called for a “constructive” India-Pakistan relationship after meeting with Pakistani Foreign Minister Bhutto Zardari on Sept. 26 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Neither New Delhi nor Washington is going to jeopardize their burgeoning partnership over relatively modest US attempts to maintain its longstanding ties with Pakistan and its military, with a view to ensuring Islamabad doesn’t become wholly dependent on China. The strength of New Delhi’s push back is undoubtedly due, at least in part, to its belief Washington is using rapprochement with Pakistan as a means to pressure New Delhi to distance itself from Russia.

Significantly, Pakistan is reported to have recently started shipping artillery and other munitions to Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine has thrown Indian foreign policy and geopolitical strategy into crisis. For the past two decades it has sought to straddle the ever-widening fault lines in world geopolitics. Beginning under the Congress Party-led United

Progressive Alliance government and then even more so under Modi and his BJP, the Indian ruling class has made its reactionary partnership with US imperialism the cornerstone of its geopolitical strategy. But even as New Delhi aligned with the US ever more openly against China, it maintained close ties with its longtime strategic partner Russia and did so for multiple reasons. Russia remains its largest supplier of weapons and weapons systems. Unlike the US, it has been ready to transfer military technology to India through various joint ventures. Russia has also provided crucial support to India’s nuclear program. Finally, the Indian establishment is well aware that unlike its “all-weather friend” Russia, Washington has repeatedly threatened India and is intent on reducing its much-vaunted “strategic autonomy” to nil by making it wholly dependent on US weapons and support.

Despite US threats to sanction India, New Delhi has purchased and deployed \$5 billion worth of Russian-made S-400 Triumf air defense missile batteries, which are considered one of the world’s most advanced long-range surface-to-air defense systems. More recently, India ignored the US sanctions on Russia after the Ukraine war and became the second largest buyer of its oil, taking advantage of deep discounts that helped the Indian economy to face the impact of steep price increases in global oil prices and global economic crisis intensified by the war and COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, New Delhi has been trying to placate the US and the European imperialist powers by distancing itself from Russia in some ways, including by sourcing military equipment from other countries so as to reduce its dependence on Russia. According to the US *Foreign Affairs* magazine, though Russia remains India’s largest supplier of arms, the share of Russian weapons in India’s arsenal has shrunk by nearly half over the past decade. Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, New Delhi deferred its plans for more military purchases from Moscow, including a deal for 21 new MiG-29 fighter jets for the Indian Air Force.

Washington, however, is far from satisfied and will exploit every opportunity to disrupt and ultimately break India’s partnership with Russia, for it views the subjugation of Russia as pivotal to strengthening its hand against China, which it has identified as its principal strategic threat.

Under conditions where the US and its NATO allies are escalating their war with Russia and Washington is ratcheting up tensions with China, India’s precarious geopolitical balancing act is becoming increasingly untenable.



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