Biden leads Washington in feting Modi, India's far-right prime minister

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President Joe Biden and the entire US political establishment are according Narendra Modi—India's far-right, Hindu supremacist prime minister—every honour and attention during his four-day US visit, which concludes Friday.

In addition to the pomp and ceremony-filled state visit, Modi was invited to address a joint session of the US Congress Thursday afternoon. He has thereby joined Winston Churchill and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as one of only a handful of foreign political leaders ever to do so twice.

The Biden-Modi summit by all reports is intended to take the Indo-US "global strategic partnership," aimed at China, to the next level.

Multibillion-dollar Indian arms purchases, joint military production and development initiatives, and measures to spur India's emergence as a rival production chain hub to China are the key summit "deliverables."

A succession of US presidents, Republican and Democratic alike, from George W. Bush and Barack Obama to Donald Trump and now Biden, have touted the Indo-US partnership as an alliance of the world's most populous "democracies" based on "shared values."

Today, this lie is more manifestly blatant and obscene than ever. During their nine years in office, Modi and his Hindu supremacist BJP have mounted a massive assault on democratic rights, while fomenting anti-Muslim and anti-minority bigotry and violence.

This includes discriminatory laws banning cow slaughter and enforced by vigilante justice; the bulldozing of the homes of Muslim government opponents; pervasive internet and social media censorship; the indefinite jailing without trial of journalists under draconian antiterrorism laws; and the passing of a labor code "reform" that criminalizes most strikes.

Even the leaders of the right-wing bourgeois opposition are hounded as the BJP and its fascistic allies, led by the Hindu supremacist RSS of which Modi is a lifelong member, seek to monopolize political power. Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the principal opposition party, the Congress Party, was recently convicted on bogus, trumped-up charges. He is barred from contesting next year's national election and, pending the outcome of his appeal, could soon be behind bars.

The US political establishment and media have made lurid, transparently fabricated accusations of Chinese state "genocide" against the country's historically Muslim Uygur minority. Yet the quasi-police state regime that prevails in India's disputed, Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir provinces is passed over in silence.

In plain sight, Modi and his BJP are laying the political and pseudo-legal bases for an authoritarian regime that will enforce the brutal exploitation of the rapidly expanding and increasingly rebellious Indian working class, while pursuing the aim of serving as a front-line state for US imperialism in its strategic offensive against China.

The Biden administration and the Washington political elite are intimately familiar with Modi's record of criminality and his authoritarian actions and ambitions. For close to a decade, ending only after he became India's prime minister in 2014, Modi was barred from entering the US because of his role, when chief minister of Gujarat, in instigating and facilitating an anti-Muslim pogrom in 2002 that killed 2,000 people and rendered hundreds of thousands homeless.

An unnamed "senior" Biden administration official recently conceded to *Al-Jazeera* that the Modi government has created a toxic communal environment consisting of "open calls for genocide against Muslims, lynching and other hate-fueled violence, attacks on places of worship and home demolitions, and in some cases impunity and even clemency for those who have engaged in attacks on religious minorities."

Seventy-five members of the US Congress, including senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, signed a letter to Biden urging that he raise human rights concerns with Modi during their summit. This was a pathetic bleat done more to preserve a shred of democratic credibility so

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they could better promote US imperialist policy, including the war against Russia, than anything else.

The letter began and ended by underlining the centrality of the Indo-US partnership in upholding "stability," i.e., imperialist interests, in the Indo-Pacific, and praised Biden for supposedly making "human rights" again a central tenet of US foreign policy. When it came to the Modi regime, the most they could bring themselves to say was that Biden should mention "the shrinking of political space, the rise of religious intolerance, the targeting of civil society organizations and journalists, and growing restrictions on press freedoms and internet access."

If Modi is the fitting representative of India's capitalist oligarchs (the top 1 percent who gorge on 45 percent of the country's wealth amid a sea of poverty and misery), so too are Biden and Trump of America's. The former has spent half a century as senator, vice president and now president immersed in imperialist intrigues. He has plotted behind the backs of the American people to instigate and prosecute war with Russia "for as long as it takes and whatever the cost," including unleashing nuclear war. Trump, the fascistic billionaire who sought to establish a presidential dictatorship through the failed January 6, 2021 coup, seeks to rally the ruling class's support by vowing to eradicate socialism.

The unanimity and fervour of official Washington's embrace of the fascist thug Modi testifies to the fever gripping the ruling class for aggression and war as the only way out of the intractable problems it confronts in securing US global hegemony overseas and suppressing an increasingly restless working class at home. Even as it pursues war with Russia in Ukraine, American imperialism is girding itself for a violent confrontation with China, which it has identified as its principal strategic rival.

As the Biden administration pursues these twin objectives, there is a definite element of flailing about. The stated aim of Secretary of State Antony Blinken's June 18-19 visit to Beijing, which included a meeting with Xi, was to reduce tensions with China. This would-be tactical shift is bound up with creating better conditions for Washington and its NATO allies to pursue war with Russia, under conditions where, with the failure of the much-vaunted Ukrainian counteroffensive, there is a mounting clamour for direct NATO intervention in the war.

Yet as Biden prepared to welcome his anti-China ally Modi, he chose to rub salt in the wound by lashing out against Xi, whom he denounced as a dictator.

That said, the harnessing of India to Washington's strategic ambitions is a long-pursued strategy. So too is the US drive to strategically encircle Russia through NATO expansion and transform Ukraine into a NATO-EU proxy.

And like the drive to dismember Russia, the Indo-US military-security "partnership" is being pursued with utter recklessness.

One incendiary element is the enmeshing of the India-China border dispute and the three-quarter-century-old Indo-Pakistani strategic rivalry with the US-China confrontation, lending a massive new explosive charge to each.

First under Trump and now Biden, the US has abandoned any pose of neutrality in the Indo-China border conflict. Washington now routinely equates it with the US-incited territorial disputes between China and its South China Sea neighbours as examples of Chinese "aggression." Under conditions where India and China have tens of thousands of troops, tanks and warplanes arrayed against each other along their contested Himalayan border, Indian officials are boasting that "real-time" US intelligence has enabled them to successfully counter alleged Chinese incursions.

During their summit, Biden will politely ignore Modi's autocratic rule and foul Hindu supremacism, but he will press him on the question of India's strategic ties with Russia. In pursuit of the Indian bourgeoisie's own predatory agenda, New Delhi has balked at US pressure that it label Russia the "aggressor" in the Ukraine war and impose punishing sanctions.

Instead, Modi has sought to placate Washington by integrating India even more fully into the US military-strategic offensive against China. And that integration—further heightened at this week's summit and including an ever-expanding number of joint exercises and interoperability agreements—is already vast. Over the past three years and very much in response to the economic and geopolitical crisis triggered by the pandemic, India has vastly increased bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral ties with the US and its principal Asia-Pacific allies, Japan and Australia. At the apex of this network is the Quad, their US-led quasi-military security alliance.

That US imperialism is waging war against Russia while systematically preparing for war with China underscores that the Ukraine war is not an episode, but the initial stages of a new imperialist repartition of the world. But the same capitalist contradictions that are exploding in imperialist war are fueling a vast upsurge in the global class struggle and creating the objective conditions for socialist revolution.

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