

Biden and Modi sign “ground breaking” military-technology agreements, hail enhanced Indo-US alliance

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28 June 2023

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s four-day, June 20–23, state visit to the US concluded with the signing of a flurry of agreements, concerning everything from arms sales and joint military production to critical minerals and resilient production chains.

Modi, US President Joe Biden, their aides and the media in India and the US have all hailed the summit and accompanying agreements as marking a new chapter in Indo-US relations.

Indeed they do. Washington is integrating India ever more fully into its all-sided, diplomatic, economic, strategic and military offensive against China. And the Modi regime and the Indian ruling class are more than willing to facilitate US imperialism’s drive to thwart China’s “rise” in exchange for strategic “favours.” While the Indian bourgeoisie boasts about the country’s “world-beating growth,” it fears the window for realizing its great-power ambitions is rapidly closing and that it could soon face the wrath of the country’s rapidly growing, brutally-exploited working class.

During Modi’s four days in America—which included a state dinner, a two-hour one-on-one meeting with Biden, a speech to a joint session of Congress and meetings with Elon Musk and other billionaires and corporate CEOs—there was much bluster about how the Indo-US “global strategic partnership” is based on “democracy” and “shared values.” Biden, with his decades-long tenure presiding over imperialist wars and intrigues, didn’t so much as blush or wince as he feted Modi, who heads a far-right authoritarian regime that is relentlessly fomenting Hindu communalism and who was himself long barred from entry to the US for his role in the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim pogrom.

At the summit’s conclusion, Modi and Biden issued a more than 6,000 word, 58 paragraph long joint statement. It listed many joint initiatives and embellished on the phony, mendacious invocations of a common commitment to democracy, diversity and human rights.

But the true foundation and impetus for the ever closer Indo-US alliance was baldly spelled out at the conclusion of the statement’s very first paragraph. It emphasized the significance of the Quad—the anti-China, quasi-military alliance between India, the US and its principal Asia-Pacific allies, Japan and Australia—and did so in the language that Washington routinely employs to justify its drive to strategically encircle China and legitimize its own hegemony over Asia. “Our cooperation,” the joint statement

declared, “will serve the global good as we work through a range of multilateral and regional groupings—particularly the Quad—to contribute toward a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific. No corner of human enterprise is untouched by the partnership between our two great countries, which spans the seas to the stars.”

The initiatives and agreements made or reaffirmed at the summit are aimed at countering China’s influence, isolating it strategically, pressuring it militarily and weakening it economically—and all with the aim of girding US imperialism to wage war against the state it has publicly labeled its principal strategic adversary.

Many of these initiatives are directly bound up with strengthening Indo-US military ties and the interoperability of their armed forces. Others serve to promote India as an alternate production-chain hub to China—as part of US efforts to “friendshore” manufacturing—and to secure the resources needed in the production of high-tech goods and weapons.

The new or recently launched initiatives include:

- The building by the US-based Micron Technologies of a \$2.75 billion microchip manufacturing and testing facility in Modi’s home state of Gujarat. Micron is to invest \$825 million with the remainder of the financing to come from the Indian and Gujarat governments.

- India’s accession to the US-led Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), which is aimed at securing access to critical minerals, including rare earths, and developing refining capacity. The existing members of the MSP are the G-7 powers, the European Union, Sweden, Finland, South Korea and Australia.

- India’s incorporation into the US-led Artemis Accords on space cooperation, which is aimed at facilitating Indo-US cooperation in rocketry and other space-related technologies, many of which have military applications.

- Agreements between the US Navy and three Indian shipyards, two on India’s west coast (the Arabian Sea) and one on India’s east coast (the Bay of Bengal), to provide service and repair to US warships mid-voyage.

- Multiple mechanisms to foster the co-production and development of weapons and weapons system. These include: a defense industrial cooperation roadmap; a security of supply arrangement and reciprocal defense procurement arrangement

“that will enable the supply of defense goods in the event of unanticipated supply chain disruptions;” and an India-US defense acceleration ecosystem (INDUS-X). The latter is described as “a network of university, incubator, corporate, think tank, and private investment stakeholders.” It is to foster new military technologies and “accelerate the integration of India’s budding private sector defense industry with the U.S. defense sector.”

India has also now finalized plans to buy US-made armed MQ-9B SeaGuardian UAVs or predator drones at a cost of more than \$3 billion.

Both Indian and the US government spokespersons and military-security analysts have emphasized the special importance of General Electric’s proposal to jointly produce its F414 jet engine in India with the partially privatized Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). The engine will be used in India’s indigenously produced Tejas Mark 2 fighter jet, which is set to begin production in 2026. The US zealously guards its jet engine technology and has hitherto shared it only with its closest treaty allies. According to reports, under the agreement GE will share some “80 percent by value” of the technologies used in the F414 with its Indian partners.

Announcing the GE-HAL agreement beside Modi in Washington last Thursday, GE CEO H. Lawrence Culp Jr. called it “historic,” adding that GE was “proud to play a role in advancing President Joe Biden and PM Modi’s vision of closer coordination between the two nations.”

From Washington’s standpoint, the weapons sales, co-production agreements and technology transfers serve multiple purposes. They bolster India’s military capabilities vis-à-vis China; can help wean India from its dependence on Russian-made weapons and weapons-systems, with a view to diminishing and ultimately breaking the longstanding Indian-Russian strategic partnership; and make India and its military increasingly dependent on the US.

Washington and New Delhi also share the objective of making India a major subcontractor of the US weapons industry and cheap-labour producer of US-designed armaments. The Pentagon aims thereby to slash its own costs and enlarge the bottom lines of US arms manufacturers. India’s goals are increased US investment and a major boost for its military industries. Currently one of the world’s largest weapons importers, India under the BJP has set itself the goal of massively expanding indigenous arms manufacture and raising its arms exports to \$5 billion annually by 2025.

The Biden administration’s drive to harness India to US imperialism’s strategic offensive against China builds on the policies pursued by the previous four Democratic and Republican administrations.

These policies have been ever more explicitly directed at transforming India into a US frontline state against China, both on land and at sea. India neighbours China and boasts that it has developed nuclear-capable missiles that can strike all parts of China from anywhere on the Indian land mass. It is also geographically the best vantage point from which to dominate the Indian Ocean, through which much of China’s oil and exports flow. With US encouragement, India is building a blue water navy

and has laid claim to a growing role in policing the Indian Ocean.

Through an ever-expanding network of bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral military-security agreements and exercises with the US, Japan and Australia, New Delhi has become enmeshed in Washington’s war preparations against China.

During the past three years, Washington has also obtrusively intervened in the Sino-Indian border dispute. As a matter of course, the US now ties the conflict in the Himalayas to those it has helped incite between China and its South China Sea neighbours as examples of Beijing’s “aggression.”

Even more ominously, the Indian military is now receiving “real time” US intelligence about Chinese troop movements, intelligence that it boasts has materially impacted on encounters between Indian and Chinese troops along their disputed border, where the two countries have forward-deployed tens of thousands of troops, tanks and warplanes.

To be sure, Washington gnashed its teeth when New Delhi balked at western demands it denounce Russia as the “aggressor” in the NATO-instigated war with Russia over Ukraine and join in the imposition of sanctions. But the Biden administration and Pentagon have tempered their anger—even turning a blind-eye to India’s sharply increased imports of discount-priced Russian oil—in pursuit of what they perceive to be the more important strategic prize, strengthening their hand against China. This of course does not mean for a moment that Washington is not working in the long term to undermine and ultimately break New Delhi’s strategic partnership with Moscow.

The Modi government, with the full complicity of the Congress Party and other bourgeois opposition forces, tries for its part to cover up the aggressive and increasingly bellicose character of the Indo-US alliance with occasional affirmations that it is directed against no other country.

This is belied on a daily basis, in word and especially in deed, by both Washington and New Delhi.

The Indo-US alliance is reactionary, reckless and incendiary. It is drawing the region and the world ever closer to a catastrophic military conflagration. It has encouraged Washington in its simultaneous pursuit of confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia and China, and it has resulted in India’s border conflict with China and historic rivalry with Pakistan becoming intertwined with the US-China clash, adding to each a massive new explosive charge.

The development of an anti-war movement uniting workers across South Asia, China, the US and around the world in opposition to imperialism, the rival capitalist governments and all the political representatives of capitalism is a strategic imperative.



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