

At Washington's behest, India's military weighing how it would assist the US in waging war on China

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India's military is considering—with urgency and at the highest-levels—what support it could and would provide the US and its allies in a war with China over Taiwan.

The “options” that the military identifies will reportedly soon be placed before India's far-right, Narendra Modi-led government and, no doubt in some form, subsequently communicated to the White House and the Pentagon.

Multiple news reports dating back to the beginning of last month say the ongoing examination of how India's three armed services—army, navy and air force—might assist US imperialism in waging war on China was ordered by India's Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan, after US officials raised the issue in multiple forums.

Last week, as US President Joe Biden began a visit to India for the G20 summit, Bloomberg and the *Times of India* published a report citing “senior Indian officials” as saying two “options” have been identified and are now to be the object of detailed study.

“One option the Indian military will study,” Bloomberg reported, “involves serving as a logistics hub to provide repair and maintenance facilities for allied warships and aircraft, as well as food, fuel and medical equipment for armies resisting China.”

India has already entered into a series of “foundational” agreements to enable and facilitate joint action with the US military. These include a Logistics-Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) under which US warplanes and warships can make routine use of Indian ports and bases for resupply and repair. However, as India is not a US treaty ally this does not automatically apply in wartime. It should also be noted that among the many agreements Modi and Biden announced at their summit in Washington last June was one between the US Navy and three Indian shipyards to provide service and repair to US warships mid-voyage.

The second “option” is even more provocative and makes clear—lest there be any doubt—that a US-China war, whatever its initial trigger, would rapidly escalate into a global conflagration.

A “more extreme scenario,” reports Bloomberg, “would assess the potential for India to get directly involved along their northern border, opening up a new theater of war for China.”

Beijing has unquestionably long been aware of such a threat. That it is now publicly being discussed as under active

consideration by India's military and political leaders is new, and highlights just how advanced are US plans to instigate a war with China, using Taiwan much in the same way as it did Ukraine.

According to Bloomberg, the “Indian military is under orders to finish” its study “as soon as possible.”

India—often described by US war planners as China's “soft underbelly”—has a longstanding border dispute with China, one that has dramatically escalated since 2020 and in which Washington has obtrusively inserted itself.

For the past three years, both India and China have “forward deployed” tens of thousands of troops, tanks and warplanes along their undefined Himalayan border, while undertaking crash programs to build fortifications, air bases, transport links and other war-related infrastructure.

Up until 2020, Washington had a professed stance of neutrality on the Indo-China border dispute. Since then, and as part of the all-sided diplomatic, economic and military-strategic offensive against China initiated under Trump and ratcheted up by Biden, it has inserted itself ever more directly into the conflict. The US government and Congress now routinely tie the Indo-China border dispute to the US-incited territorial conflicts between China and its neighbours over the South China Sea, saying they are proof of Beijing's “aggression.” In December, shortly after the conclusion of a joint Indo-US military exercise “in high altitude warfare” less than 100 kilometres from India's border with China, Indian officials boasted that they had blocked a People's Liberation Army “border incursion” thanks to “real-time” intelligence provided by Washington.

The admission via “leaks” that India's military is weighing the possibility of opening a second front in the event of a US-China war can only further inflame relations with Beijing.

It comes shortly after three recently retired Indian forces chiefs—Army Chief Manoj Naravane, Navy Chief Karambir Singh, and Air Force Chief RKS Bhaduria—visited Taipei to participate in the Taiwan government-backed Ketagalan Forum on Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue and meet with officials from Taiwan's key defense think tank, the Institute of National Defense and Security Research. The retired status of the three enabled New Delhi to officially maintain the pretense that it is not seeking closer military ties with Taiwan or violating its adherence to a one-China policy. There is no question, however, that the trip was undertaken

at the Modi government's behest.

Neither Bloomberg nor the *Times of India* reports mentioned, let alone raised any concern, over the fact that both China and India are nuclear powers, and that New Delhi has justified its development of a nuclear triad equipped with intercontinental missiles with claims that China is its principal strategic threat.

Similarly, these reports ignored the implications for the balance of power in South Asia of India's role as a frontline state in a US war on China. Pakistan, India's historic strategic rival, has forged ever deeper military-security ties with China over the past decade and a half in response to Washington's showering New Delhi with strategic favours. With the aim of harnessing India ever more tightly to its drive to strategically isolate, encircle and subjugate China, the US has given New Delhi access to high-tech weaponry and civilian nuclear technology, and endorsed its illegal and provocative "surgical" military strikes inside Pakistan.

In the event of a US war on China, and all the more so if India directly attacked China, Pakistan's ruling class would face massive geostrategic compulsions to throw its military forces, also nuclear-armed, into the balance.

Indian military doctrine calls for it to be capable of waging a two-front war against China and Pakistan and its generals frequently boast that they have the weaponry and prowess to do so.

Chilling as are the "options" India is said to be weighing they hardly exhaust the means whereby New Delhi could aid and abet a US war on China. From India's expanding network of northern air bases, US warplanes could reach deep into China. India also has a large and growing "bluewater" navy and is eager to assume a bigger role in "providing security" in the Indian Ocean, through which the world's most important sea-lanes pass, including those that convey much of China's export trade and the energy and other resources that fuel its economy. While India has thus far refrained from mounting joint naval patrols with the US in the South China Sea, its ships now routinely "show the flag" there. It regularly stages quadrilateral joint naval exercises elsewhere with the US and its principal Asia-Pacific allies, Japan and Australia, and in recent months has bolstered its military-security ties with both Vietnam and the Philippines.

The Modi government responded to the intensification of the global capitalist crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic by doubling down on the twin pillars of the class strategy the Indian bourgeoisie has pursued for the past three decades. These are pro-investor reforms aimed at intensifying the exploitation of the working class so as to attract global capital and the strengthening of the Indo-US "global strategic" partnership.

Over the past three and a half years, New Delhi has dramatically increased its integration into the US war drive against China, strengthening bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral strategic ties—as exemplified by the quasi military-security alliance known as the Quad—with the US, Japan and Australia.

Nevertheless, New Delhi balked at the demands from the US and its NATO allies that it break its decades-long close military-strategic and commercial ties with Russia at the beginning of the Ukraine war. Cheap Russian oil has helped alleviate mounting pressure on the Indian economy, and New Delhi continues to depend on its ties with Moscow to equip its military forces, assist

with its civilian nuclear program and provide it some "strategic autonomy" from the western powers.

Various petty bourgeois pseudo-left forces opposed to the struggle to mobilize the global working class against war on the basis of a revolutionary socialist program—like the Indian Stalinist US-based academic Vijay Prashad—have celebrated the Modi government's failure to line up four-square behind the US-NATO war on Russia. They claim this is part of the "emergence of a new non-alignment" and a "multi-polar world" that can provide the basis for accommodating the mutual interests of the imperialist powers and the capitalist regimes of the "Global South."

This is all willfully blind. Under the political leadership of the vile Hindu supremacist Narendra Modi and under conditions where the NATO war on Russia has demonstrated the western powers' readiness to risk nuclear war in pursuit of their imperialist interests, the Indian bourgeoisie is integrating itself ever more fully into the US war drive against China.

It is doing so in pursuit of its own reactionary ends, including its ambition to transform India into global capital's prime alternate cheap-labour production chain hub to China, but also to offset pressure from Washington over its ties with Russia.

As for India's much-vaunted policy of "strategic autonomy," there is nothing "progressive," let alone "anti-imperialist" about it. Its purpose is to enable the Indian ruling class to better pursue its own predatory interests. Chief among them are haggling for a higher price for its role as a US satrap against China, and pulling the wool over the eyes of India's workers and toilers as to how deeply complicit and implicated it is in American imperialism's war drive against China.

As twice in the last century, global capitalist breakdown is leading to an imperialist drive to repartition the world through world war. But the same crisis is fueling a mass upsurge of the global working class and creating thereby the objective basis for the development of a mass anti-war movement—in opposition to all the political representatives of the rival nationally-based capitalist cliques and their governments—and the overthrow of the profit system, the source of all war, imperialist oppression and social inequality.



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