

# Indian prime minister's Pacific tour focusses on military issues

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Over the past week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi carried out a three-nation visit to Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand to bolster strategic and economic ties in the Indo-Pacific. The heavy emphasis of Modi's trip on military collaboration and developing supply chains for critical minerals are closely connected to the accelerating US-led war drive against China.

India's strategic partnership with US imperialism and military ties are directed above all against Beijing, as is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or "Quad"—a security pact involving the US, India, Australia and Japan. India remains a key element of the Pentagon's planning for war with China, even though the US Indo-Pacific Command based in Hawaii was renamed last month to the US Pacific Command, suggesting a shift away from Indian Ocean and India.

While it remains an integral part of the US-led military build-up against China, the Modi government is also determined to project India on the world stage and to ruthlessly pursue its strategic and economic interests. India's longstanding relations with Russia, including the purchase of arms, came into collision with the US, which imposed a 50 percent tariff last year on Indian imports for its continued purchases of oil and weapons.

The first leg of Modi's trip to Jakarta took place on July 6–8. He held talks with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, addressed the Indonesian parliament and visited Prambanan, the ancient World Heritage Hindu temple in central Java. A section of Indian diaspora staged an effusive welcome for the far-right, Hindu chauvinist Modi, as later occurred in Australia and New Zealand.

Modi and Prabowo both paid lip service to regional peace and stability. Modi told the Indonesian

parliament: "Our partnership is not ?merely a relationship between two countries, it is a pledge of trust in the stability in the Indo-Pacific, strength of the Global South and in a ?shared future of the world."

Neither leader mentioned that fact that an agreement for Indonesia's purchase of the advanced supersonic BrahMos cruise missile system had been signed during Modi's visit. The precision missile system produced by BrahMos, an India-Russia ?joint venture, has a range of 290 kilometres, carries a 200 kg warhead and can be launched from land, air, ship and submarine. Although not announced, the deal is reportedly worth more than \$600 million.

Separately, Indonesia's Republikorp, a defence private holding company, ?and India-based defence company Bharat Dynamics signed an agreement to purchase air-to-air missiles.

The weapon sales are a sign of the strengthening military collaboration between the two countries, particularly in so-called maritime security. Both Indonesia and India are seeking to tighten their control of the Malacca Strait—a vital choke point in any conflict with China through which roughly a quarter of the world's seaborne traded goods passes, including around 80 percent of oil destined for North East Asia. Joint naval exercises and patrols are regularly held, as well as the collaboration of coast guards.

On the economic front, India agreed during the visit to "invest in the manufacturing of steel, nickel and rare-earth permanent magnets in Indonesia" as well as to "develop rare-earth metal processing" in Indonesia—essential to circumventing China's monopoly of critical mineral production.

Behind much fanfare, Modi's state visit to Melbourne, Australia on July 8–10 had a similar, militaristic character. His meeting with Australian

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was the third in a series of annual summits that has resulted in a host of agreements and memoranda of understanding including a further upgrading of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership reached in 2020 and the facilitation of Australian uranium exports to India.

As part of the Quad pact, Australia and India have already forged close military ties, including through mutual provision of logistical military support and an air-to-air refuelling agreement. A memorandum of understanding has been reached between the coast guard forces of the two countries, and Australia is providing support to India's space program through its space-tracking facility on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean.

The collaboration of the Australian and Indian militaries extends to a range of joint war games, on the land and in the air and sea. Last month, the defence ministers of the two countries praised the evolution of the joint army drills, Exercise Austrahind, which will focus this year on amphibious combat and manoeuvres in littoral waters. Each took part in the other's naval drills this year—India's Exercise Milan in February 2026 and Australia's Exercise Kakadu in March 2026.

A new administrative agreement will facilitate the export of Australian uranium to India, which has been held up for over a decade amid Australian concerns over India's nuclear weapons program and its consequent refusal to sign the international Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In reality, no administrative measures can ensure that Australian exports will not assist India's production of nuclear weapons either directly, or indirectly. India already has deals with Kazakhstan and Canada to supply uranium.

The final leg of Modi's trip was to New Zealand on July 10–11—the first by an Indian prime minister in nearly 40 years, since Rajiv Gandhi visited in 1986. Talks between Modi and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon resulted in the establishment of a strategic partnership between the two countries. New Zealand is an ally of the US and in line with the preparations for war against China has boosted military spending and backed US-led wars in the Middle East and against Russia in Ukraine.

Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, who took part in the bilateral talks, underscored the importance of intelligence coordination and national

security, all under the phony pretext of a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. New Zealand is part of the top-level “Five Eyes” intelligence sharing network with the US, Australia, Britain and Canada, and operates the crucial Waihopai electronic spy base that feeds vital intelligence to the US from across the region.

The central focus of Modi's visit was the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries that was reached last year but is yet to be ratified by the New Zealand parliament. One of the partners in Luxon's coalition government—the right-wing, anti-immigrant New Zealand First Party—has opposed the agreement on racist grounds, claiming that it would allow a flood of Indian migrants into the country.

While small anti-Modi protests took place in Australia and New Zealand, the political and media establishments in all three countries made no mention of Modi's own right-wing, anti-working class measures nor his long history of vicious, sectarian attacks on India's minorities, particularly Muslims.



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