

Conflict in Ukraine

India Should Quit Quad Now!

by M. K. Bhadrakumar,* India



M. K. Bhadrakumar
(Picture ma)

Hedging between super-powers – United States, Russia and China – was never the smart thing to do. India should have known that the contradictions are simply irreconcilable.

This is a moment of truth, therefore, as the US unsheathes the sword to bleed

and dismember Russia, and gives an ultimatum to China to stay out of it.

The gravity of the situation is sinking in, finally. That is the message coming out of the *Cabinet Committee on Security meeting*¹ (CCS) convened by Prime Minister *Narendra Modi* on Sunday “to review India’s security preparedness, and the prevailing global scenario in the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine,” where he was briefed “on latest developments and different aspects of India’s security preparedness in the border areas as well as in the maritime and air domain.”

The US National Security Advisor *Jake Sullivan*’s meeting with China’s top diplomat and Politburo member *Yang Jiechi* in Rome later today [14 March] promises to be a defining moment in world politics.

Yesterday, Sullivan explicitly threatened China in an interview with CNN. He said: “We are communicating directly, privately to Beijing, that there will absolutely be consequences for large-scale sanctions evasion efforts or support to Russia to backfill them. We will not allow that to go forward and allow there to be a lifeline to Russia from these economic sanctions from any country, anywhere in the world.”

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Prime Minister Modi chaired a meeting of Cabinet Committee on Security and top officials, New Delhi, March 13, 2022. (Photo ma)

The warning to China is that it should conform to the US sanctions against Russia and desist from providing support (“lifeline”) to Russia in any form.

US threats to China also apply to India

The cutting edge of Sullivan’s statement is that it also applies to India. The implications are very, very severe. Simply put, Washington’s demand is also be that India should abandon its relationship with Russia.

That means principally, that India should freeze the defence relationship. Considering that something like 60–70% of weaponry for our armed forces is of Russian origin, this will render a crippling blow to India’s defence preparedness.

Essentially, this is going to be baptism by fire for the Indian leadership. It stands to reason that the Americans have already conveyed their charter of demands to the government, and PM’s hurried move to convene the CCS ensued.

Last week, the Russian minister of energy had a call with his Indian counterpart where he not only offered oil at concessional rates but also invited Indian companies to step up investments in Russian oil and gas fields on a preferential basis.

At a time when oil price crossed \$130 a barrel and spot market price for gas is approaching \$4000 per thousand cubic meters, the Russian offer came as a gift from God.

But the fact that the government downplayed it shows a state of paranoia – symptomatic of the same pusillanimity that characterized the

UPA mindset [United Progressive Alliance 2004–2024 under Manmohan Singh], prompting the rollback of ties with Iran.

The Americans have experienced that our elite are largely men of straw. Given the scale of corruption, there are all kinds of interest groups in our country. Besides, the comprador elements within our elite are stakeholders in the American agenda. That is a tragic fact of life.

However, the difference today is that the looming American threat would have vital bearing on India's defence capabilities, and national security. For a government that proclaims the nationalist credo, the choice ought to be clear.

It is about the country's independence

The Modi government should refuse to comply with the American legislations regarding Russia. Period. In all likelihood, Americans are bluffing. Or, if there is going to be a price to pay, the leadership should take the nation into confidence and explain the long-term imperative of safeguarding the country's core interests at whatever cost. Indians are a patriotic people.

To my understanding, in the world of today, American hegemony is unsustainable. The US bullies those who are susceptible to bullying and blackmails those ruling elites who are vulnerable to blackmail, individually or collectively. Hopefully, our ruling elite do not fall into such a pitiable category.

Freedom struggle was so much more arduous. The predicament today is also about the country's independence. The nation will rally under an inspiring leader.

Things have come to such a sorry pass today largely due to the flawed foreign policies through the past two decades or so when the American lobbyists began expounding that India's interests are best served in an alliance with the US.

'Non-Alignment' and 'strategic autonomy' became archaic concepts. Thus, circa 2000 or so, India 'crossed the Rubicon', to borrow the title of an infamous book of those times, to be with our 'natural allies'. Where has it brought the country today after 21 years?

The self-styled foreign policy gurus in the media and the strategic immunity proved horribly wrong in their assessment of international politics. Beyond the Rubicon, what we saw and experienced was a bleached landscape of parched earth and birds of prey, so different from the El

Dorado that we were promised by the carpetbaggers.

Distancing from the self-centred US polices

Indian foreign policy needs a strategic course correction. India should distance itself completely from the self-centred US polices whose aim is the preservation of its global hegemony. The first step in that direction should be to quit *Quad* [strategic security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan, USA].

Make no mistake, a US-China showdown is in the making sooner than one might have expected it, and it will be calamitous for India to get sucked into it. The visit by Japanese prime minister *Fumio Kishida* to India this weekend causes disquiet.

By the colour of our skin, our religion, our culture, our geography, our political economy, we will never be accepted by the West as 'one of us'. Do not be mesmerised by promises of equal partnerships. Look at the US' track record – selfish, cynical and ruthless in the pursuit of its interests.

History didn't end with the eclipse of the Cold War. Fundamentally, what the Western powers are planning is a form of neo-colonialism borne out of the desperate need to arrest the decline of their economies through a massive transfer of wealth from the rest of the world inhabited by 88 percent of mankind – Asia, in particular. To that end, the West has unceremoniously buried 'globalisation' and turned its back on multilateralism.

Quintessentially, what is unfolding is no different from 19th century colonial era. Therefore, India should work together with like-minded countries that are stakeholders in the preservation of their sovereignty, hard-won independence and most important, their cherished freedom to choose their paths of development insulated from interference in internal affairs or attempts at 'regime change'.

Establishing a peaceful foreign policy environment

A peaceful external environment is an imperative need and the foreign policy should prioritise that objective. It means a revamp of India's policies toward China and Pakistan. We are stuck in a groove cut decades ago largely for propaganda purposes, unable to disown our self-serving narratives.

Fortunately, there are incipient signs of re-think lately. Do not let Washington queer the pitch of India's crucial relationships with China or Pakistan.

A nation has no future if it is incapable of introspection. Mistakes have been made but it is false pride and hubris not to make amends. Indi-

ans are a forgiving people. And as for the present government at least, it only inherited the false narratives.

Source: <https://www.indianpunchline.com/india-should-quit-quad-now/>, 14 March 2022

¹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1805516>