

From Strategic Partnership to Logistic Exchange Surrender to US Hegemonic Designs

The US Defence secretary Ashton Carter's three day visit to India had further "deepened" bilateral military security ties between the two countries. On 12th April in a joint statement, Carter and his Indian counterpart ManoharParrikar announced that Washington and New Delhi have "agreed in principle" on logistic exchange agreement under which the US military will be able to routinely use Indian bases and ports for resupply, repairs and rest.

They said expansion of US-Indo military ties meant new "practical mechanisms" were needed, and had agreed to finalise a Logistic Exchange memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) "in the coming months" with a draft agreement to be ready "in a month if not weeks".

The LEMOA has far reaching military and strategic implications for India and the world. Behind the backs of the Indian people and even not informing the Parliament, the BJP-led NDA government has been transforming India into a "frontline state" in US imperialist's drive for world hegemony, particularly in Asia and encircling China and if need be wage war on China. The Indian ruling classes with their ambitions for regional hegemony are surrendering the interests of Indian people to the military designs of US imperialism.

The process of surrender accelerated with the advent of structural adjustment programmes dictated by the imperialist financial institutions. The Indian ruling classes and their political representatives, both UPA and NDA, formed a "strategic partnership" with Washington. During the decade and a half period since then, Indian military became the Pentagon's most frequent partner in military exercises and became biggest buyer of weapons from the US. Indian navy became the provider of security to the shipping trade line along the Malacca straits. As the US designed its "pivot to Asia" policy in 2011, pressure from US imperialism had mounted to bring India into its hegemonic designs in Asia. Since Modi's government came to the power, it moved aggressively to integrate India ever-more deeply into US imperialist military strategy.

During two years in power, the BJP government pushed this process further: signed "US-India Joint Strategic Vision Agreement for Asia Pacific region and Indian ocean" concurring with US aims in South China Sea; assisted the US in its regime change operation in the 2015 Sri Lankan presidential elections; included Japan as a permanent partner of the annual US-India Malabar naval exercises and in International Fleet Review held at Visakhapatnam; expanded relations with Japan and Australia – US's principal allies in its pivot to Asia policy.

Modi's government has also pressed forward with the implementation of a US-Indo "Defence Technology and Trade Initiative", through which the US monopoly capital will have deals to co-produce and co-develop advanced weapon systems. By this the US wants to tie the Indian military to its production and make it dependent on US technology and support. Modi's 'Make in India' slogan is only meant to hide this fact.

In this broader context of rapid expansion of US-Indian military ties, one has to grasp the real import of LEMOA. Both the Indian and US officials down played the significance of LEMOA as it faced stiff resistance from the Indian people.

The US and its Pentagon usually signs with other countries the Logistic Support Agreements (LSA) which makes them to follow the military aggressions of the US imperialism and allows the US military free access to use the bases and ports of these countries. Both Carter and Parrikar claimed that LEMOA differs with LSA because it will operate on a case-by-case basis and India have the right to refuse a US request for assistance. They told that if Washington were to go to war, India would be under no obligation to allow the US military to continue to use its bases. There is no if, the US is waging wars continuously since 2001 in the Middle East and then in North Africa. Allowing it to use the Indian ports now means assisting the US wars of aggressions. The reciprocal benefit of using the US military facilities by India will not arise at all.

At the same time. Carter emphasized that the agreement is not about stationing US troops in India, but about making "it more routine and automatic for us to operate together", which means that using of Indian ports and bases by the US military would be a routine affairs that needs no political decision. In the same breath, Carter suggested that US troops could be deployed in India, but only for specific mission, which he

labeled as humanitarian. In his own words, “*as and when a situation arises, like an earthquake or natural disaster that is when it is directed at*”.

India suffers from natural disasters frequently and the Indian army is participating in relief operations. And there is no need for any foreign military troops to come to rescue that too by an agreement. Even a gullible man can see through the ruse meant to hoodwink the people. Humanitarian mission- sounds lofty, but in practice it becomes a plea for military intervention. Had not the Ethiopia a victim of US aggression in the name of humanitarian mission. Is it not the same in the aggression of Libya? While the US’s sanctions on Iraq killed five lakh children for lack of medicine, the US imperialism used false propaganda of Saddam Husain stealing the ventilators from the Kuwait hospitals to justify its military aggression over Iraq. If LEMOA were to be signed it will open up India for the entry of US troops as and when wished by the Uncle Sam.

Carter proclaimed the US’s support for India’s plans for acquisition of warships, including the third aircraft carrier, saying Washington believes that India should be a “*net exporter of security*” to the region. This is echoed in the joint statement: “*reaffirmed the importance of safeguarding the maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the Indo-Pacific region, including the South China Sea*”. This is nothing but parroting of Washington’s line. It depicts China as the aggressor, while it is the US that has encouraged South-East Asian countries to press for maritime claims against China. Though the US imperialism portrays this as an act of ensuring the free flow of trade, its real aim is to ensure its warships have ready access to China’s coastal waters and control over the sea lines.

During his India visit, Carter promoted deals to both sell and produce in India the Lockheed Martin – made F-16 fighter jet and Boeing’s F/A 18 aircraft. Both the sides agreed to launch a bilateral maritime security dialogue led by high level defence and foreign affairs officials; to commence navy-to-navy discussions on anti-submarine warfare; and continue talks on a joint aircraft-carrier design project and the transfer to India of US catapult take-off technology.

India has yet again emerged as the world’s largest importer of arms, with Russia being the top supplier garnering 70% of the Indian market, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said in a report.

India’s imports, accounting for 14% of global arms imports, were three times greater than those of China and Pakistan, it said. The emergence of the US as a major supplier to India is a recent development. The US imports are also growing. They were 11 times higher in 2011–15 than in 2006–10. However, based on existing orders and weapons, Russia will remain, by a significant distance, the main supplier of major arms to India for the foreseeable future.

The LEMOA will be so designed as to increase India’s dependence on US imperialism for military supplies and follow the US wherever it goes into war. In this India becomes a menacing force to its neighbours in south Asia.

Indian ruling classes had signed a military co-operation treaty with Russian social imperialism following which they “liberated” East Pakistan to form Bangla Desh. It interfered in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka as a part of super power rivalry between US and Russia. The treaty was allowed to expire after the social imperialism collapsed in in 1990. Up to that time, Indian government acted as a stooge to the Russian social imperialism. The proposed agreement with US imperialism will be of the same nature.

In all probability, LEMOA will be signed with US imperialism in the coming months. This will make India a junior partner in the military aggressions committed and to be committed by the US imperialism. It plans to perpetuate the dependence of India for its military needs on the imperialist countries, particularly US imperialism. With their regional hegemonic ambitions, the Indian ruling classes will resort to raking up national chauvinism against the neighbouring countries to divert the people’s attention from the hegemonic designs of imperialist powers as well as regional ambitions of Indian ruling elite in south Asia and Indian Ocean.

This should be stopped. The democratic and peace loving people and forces should join hands to express their protest against the surrender of Indian interests to US imperialism through military agreements and to force the ruling classes to retreat from their decision.
