

Dangerous Crossroads: U.S. Expands Asian NATO Against China, Russia

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On October 12 the United States and India launched an eighteen-day military exercise codenamed Yudh Abhyas (war study) in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Described as “one of their largest-ever ground combat joint exercises,” [1], the war games “involve the Indian Army Motorized Infantry Battalion and the 2nd Squadron of 14 CAV of 25 Stryker Brigade Combat Team, comprising some 320 U.S. servicemen.” [2]

The deployment of Stryker armored combat vehicles for the drills marks the first time they have been used overseas since being introduced in Iraq in 2003 and sent to Afghanistan earlier this year. A week before the exercise began the Pentagon reported that “The Army plans to deploy 17 of its Stryker combat vehicles this month to India for the first exercise of its kind in the country.

“This is also the largest deployment of the Strykers outside of those sent to Iraq and Afghanistan.” [3]

Far from being an isolated case, the joint U.S-Indian operation is emblematic of unprecedented military cooperation between the two nuclear nations over the past few years, in fact a strategic military partnership whose major purposes are to supplant Russia as India’s decades-long main defense ally and arms supplier and to consolidate a U.S.-led military bloc in the Asia Pacific region aimed at containing China and furthering the encirclement of both that nation and Russia.

A U.S. Defense Department release on the currently ongoing exercise in question mentioned that “more than two years in the planning, [it] comes as the Defense Department continues to reach out to India to increase its military collaboration. Pacific Command’s top officer, Navy Adm. Timothy J. Keating, last month traveled to India and said officials there have committed to increasing their military relationship with the United States.” [4]

While the drills immediately address more modest goals – ostensibly practicing counterinsurgency and anti-terrorist techniques – “Hundreds of soldiers using heavy transport aircraft and battle tanks are participating in the biggest-ever war games between the two countries which were on the opposing side of the Cold War but now seek to build strategic and military ties.

“With an ally in India, Washington also seeks to keep an eye on the Chinese army’s growing military mobility and strength in the area.” [5]

In addition, an Indian press source reported that “Mid-way through Yudh Abhyas, yet another exercise named Cope India-09 between the air forces of the two countries will begin

at Agra Oct 19.” [6]

The Times of India reported on September 24 that an annual Chinese-Indian military exercise held each December since 2007 “as a major confidence-building measure between them” has been cancelled for 2009.

How far the displacement of Russia as India’s major military ally has progressed against the backdrop of the Pentagon’s plans for an Asia Pacific analogue of NATO was detailed by the Voice of America recently:

“For decades, India mostly depended on, first, the Soviet Union and then Russia for its military supplies. But as the Cold War ended and India’s relations with the United States began improving during Bill Clinton’s presidency, New Delhi gradually increased its military cooperation with Washington....Today, besides holding joint military exercises with the U.S. military, India has also been buying U.S. armaments worth billions of dollars.”

The same article quoted the Indian ambassador to the United States, Meera Shankar:

“Our militaries once unfamiliar with each other now hold regular dialog and joint exercises in the air and on land and sea....Our defense trade was negligible a decade ago. We placed orders worth \$3.5 billion last year and it could grow even more in the future.” [7]

Heightened full spectrum – ground, air and sea – military collaboration between the U.S. and India is in part related to the escalation of America’s and NATO’s war in South Asia: Afghanistan and Pakistan, India’s neighbor.

On October 13 the Washington Post revealed that the White House will send 13,000 support troops to join the additional 21,000 combat forces already and soon to be deployed this year and the BBC announced the following day that “the Obama administration had already told the UK government it would soon announce a substantial increase to its military forces in Afghanistan,” to be formally confirmed next week at a meeting of NATO defense chiefs in the capital of Slovakia. [8] On the 15th the NATO regional commander in southern Afghanistan, Major General Mart de Kruif, said of Helmand province and adjacent areas that “we need at least two additional brigades of coalition forces, somewhere between 10,000 or 15,000 troops.” [9]

NATO’s Military Committee, the senior military authority in the Alliance, just completed a tour of inspection to Afghanistan. “In attendance were Military Representatives from all 28 NATO member states as well as Military Representatives from the 14 non-NATO nations who also contribute forces to ISAF.” [10]

India has been assigned a role to play in the “stabilization” of the subcontinent as Afghanistan and Pakistan alike have been plunged into war and chaos since the U.S. and NATO invaded the first nation on October 7, 2001.

But the New Delhi-Washington axis is fraught with even grander designs and potentially catastrophic dangers.

With the North Atlantic Treaty Organization expanding into Eastern Europe – practically all of Eastern Europe – over the last ten years and its upgrading of military contacts and deployments through various partnership agreements (Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, Contact Countries, Trilateral Afghanistan-Pakistan-

NATO Military Commission), the world's only military alliance spans five continents, the Middle East and the South Pacific, effectively taking over other former Cold War military blocs like the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) and thus constituting history's first international military alliance.

The four nations identified by NATO as Contact Countries – Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea – are all in the Asia Pacific area and in varying degrees all have contributed troops and naval support to the U.S.-NATO war in Afghanistan.

Initiatives like the U.S.-instituted Proliferation Security Initiative [11] naval surveillance and interdiction operation, begun in and still primarily focused on Asia, and the global missile shield program [12] both integrate major NATO member states and candidates for an emerging Asian NATO.

India as a nuclear power and the world's second most populous nation, one bordering China and with historical strategic ties with Russia, is pivotal in Western designs to establish worldwide military superiority so that, in the words of an Indian analyst several years ago, the U.S. can complete its vision for dominance over every sector of the globe with this stratagem: To have closer state-to-state relations with every nation in the world than all other nations have with any other nation, even neighboring states.

Just as in 1978 former rivals Egypt and Israel were reconciled unilaterally by the U.S., which is nowhere near the Middle East, so now any two countries in the world in a conflict situation – from South Asia to the Caucasus, from Africa to the Balkans – must go through Washington and Brussels to resolve their differences. That role, like so many others, has devolved from the United Nations to the United States and NATO.

U.S. and general Western military strategy in Asia is not limited to India, however preeminent a role that country has in the West's plans. Australia, which earlier this year released a Defence White Paper [13] announcing its largest-ever arms buildup and plans to arrogate to itself the role of a regional military power, is “pushing to rebuild its defence ties with India, risking the potential ire of China by formally requesting Australia be allowed to participate in the annual India-US joint naval exercise Malabar.” [14]

The Malabar naval war games are an integral component of U.S. plans to integrate India into its Asian and global military nexus. An Indian news sources reported the following in relation to this year's exercise:

“The exercise in the Malabar series will take place [April 2009] off the Japanese coast in which Indian warships will carry out training manoeuvres in naval warfare alongside US Navy and Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force warships.

“The Malabar exercise, which began as a bilateral exercise in 1992 with the Americans, has in recent years taken on a multi-national character with greater participation from US allies and has made China sit up and take note.

“The last Malabar trilateral exercise involving India, the US and Japan was held in early 2007 off the Japanese coast. In the later part of that year, India joined the multilateral 25-warship Malabar exercise involving the navies of Singapore and Australia too, apart from US and Japan in the Bay of Bengal.” [15]

Australia's intention to participate in the next Malabar drills - "an exercise obviously intended by the US to be a foil to China's strategic military might" - also comes "in the wake of the [Prime Minister Kevin] Rudd government's controversial defence white paper, which called for a build-up of naval capacity and appeared to suggest Australian defence strategy in coming decades would be shaped by China's military expansion." [16]

While visiting the nation recently Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith "invited India to participate in multilateral Australian Defence Force-hosted exercises Kakadu and Pitch Black." [17]

India borders China as do several other countries where the U.S. and its NATO allies have stationed troops and where they regularly conduct or will conduct military exercises, Afghanistan and Pakistan among them.

The Pentagon's Pacific Command has been holding annual joint Khaan Quest military operations in Mongolia, which borders both China and Russia.

In July Mongolia announced that it was providing troops to NATO for the war in Afghanistan, with an American news report stating "the country plans to send troops to Afghanistan, in a cooperation that stems from its 'third neighbor' policy to reach out to allies other than China and Russia," and "Mongolia's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has helped cement its alliance with the United States and secure grants and aid." [18]

Last month NATO conducted a twenty-nation disaster response exercise, ZHETYSU 2009, in Kazakhstan, which also abuts China and Russia. French president Nicolas Sarkozy has just secured rights to transit his nation's military forces through the country.

On September 27 the Chinese press reported on a multinational military exercise to be conducted in Cambodia, one nation removed from China, next year:

"[M]ore than 2,000 military men are reserved for the first-ever event in the country and they will come from more than 20 countries, of which 1,500 will be from the United States.

"[D]uring a four-day visit to Washington D.C., Tea Banh, Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, had met with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and discussed security cooperation between the United States and Cambodia." [19]

On October 14 reports surfaced on Taiwan conducting its "largest-ever missile test...launched from a secretive and tightly guarded base in southern Taiwan."

The report also said the missiles were "capable of reaching major Chinese cities." [20]

With President Ma Ying-jeou observing, "the drill included the test-firing of a top secret, newly developed medium-range surface-to-surface missile with a range of 3,000 kilometres, capable of striking major cities in central, northern and southern China." [21]

The following day's news reported that the Defense Ministry of South Korea "plans to equip the Navy's 7,600-ton-class Aegis vessels, including a King Sejong-class destroyer, with the newest-type American-made SM-6 missiles" and that "to ensure proper use of SM-6 [Extended Range Active] missiles, the South Korean Navy will naturally be linked to the U.S. missile defense system, considering that it will need the assistance of some intelligence

reconnaissance devices, including spy satellites and radars, in the U.S. MD [missile defense] system.” [22]

Each year the Pentagon leads the multinational Cobra Gold war games in Thailand. This year the armed forces of the host country, the U.S., Japan, Singapore and Indonesia were involved and several other nations “participate[d] in various roles during the exercise”: Australia, Brunei, France, Italy, Britain, Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, the Peoples Republic of Cambodia, China, Canada, Germany, South Korea, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Mongolia. [23]

Excepting China, the above roster is a faithful representation of a NATO-Asian NATO axis in formation.

On October 14 the USS Bonhomme Richard amphibious assault ship arrived in East Timor for the latter’s “first joint military exercise with the United States” and it was reported that “manoeuvres with 2,500 US troops and Australia forces are to last through October 24.” [24]

The American ambassador to the new nation, Hans Klem, said that the exercises would focus on “jungle training, urban training, infantry training [and] beach landings....” [25]

The Pentagon’s military penetration of Asia and encroachment on China, coordinated at every turn with Washington’s NATO allies, is part of an international campaign to achieve military presence in and domination over every longitude and latitude. The European continent has been subsumed almost completely under NATO.

America’s new Africa Command recently completed a 25-nation military exercise in Gabon and will soon begin multinational maneuvers in Uganda.

The war in Afghanistan has recently provided the U.S. and NATO new basing and military transit rights in the Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. “The United States has secured ‘lethal transit’ deals with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan....Both the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense and the US Embassy in Bishkek confirmed earlier that the Manas Transit Center is facilitating the shipment of military freight going to Afghanistan....[T]he transit of supplies into Afghanistan via Turkmenistan ‘is possible’....” [26]

Of the three nations in the South Caucasus, Georgia and Azerbaijan are veritable Pentagon and NATO military outposts on Russia’s borders and Armenia just announced it might send troops to Afghanistan to serve under NATO command.

Washington has recently secured the use of seven new military bases in Colombia and has announced similar plans for two naval facilities in Panama two years after reactivating U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command.

Even uninhabited areas of the world (and their energy and other resources) are not beyond the Pentagon’s and NATO’s purview.

On October 9 the top military commander of U.S. European Command and NATO, Admiral James Stavridis, “warn[ed] of conflict with Russia in [the] Arctic Circle” as The Times of London phrased it.

Last week an Indian writer offered this concise perspective:

“The arc of encirclement of Russia gets strengthened. NATO ties facilitate the deployment of the US missile defence system in Georgia. The US aims to have a chain of countries tied to ‘partnerships’ with NATO brought into its missile defence system – stretching from its allies in the Baltic to those in Central Europe. The ultimate objective of this is to neutralise the strategic capability of Russia and China and to establish its nuclear superiority. The National Defense Strategy document, issued by the Pentagon on July 31, 2008, portrays Washington’s perception of a resurgent Russia and a rising China as potential adversaries.” [27]

The analyst doesn’t exaggerate.

In February 2008 a Reuters report said that, “The United States is worried that Russia, China and OPEC oil-producing countries could use their growing financial clout to advance political goals, the top U.S. spy chief told Congress....”

National Director of Intelligence Michael McConnell told the Senate Intelligence Committee that he had “concerns about the financial capabilities of Russia, China and OPEC countries.”

His concerns, however, suggested military rather than economic and trade matters. A summary of his testimony had little to say of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and much about Russia and China.

“Russia, bolstered in part by oil revenues, was positioning itself to control an energy supply and transportation network from Europe to East Asia, and the Russian military had begun to reverse a long decline....China has pursued a policy of global engagement out of a desire to expand its growing economy and obtain access markets, resources, technology and expertise.” [28]

Shortly afterward Russia “demanded an explanation from America over a report by the director of American national intelligence in which Russia, China, Iraq, Iran, North Korea and al-Qaida are described as sources of strategic threats to the U.S, ITAR-TASS has been told by a source close to the Kremlin.” [29]

That is, Russia and China had effectively been added to the infamous “axis of evil” targeted by former president George W. Bush in January of 2002.

Though Bush’s departure from the White House and his successor’s arrival there haven’t changed anything, except if anything to makes matters progressively worse.

An Associated Press story of May 1, 2009 mentioned that “The Obama administration is working to improve deteriorating U.S. relations with a number of Latin American nations to counter growing Iranian, Chinese and Russian influence in the Western Hemisphere, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said....[30]

In the latest quadrennial National Intelligence Strategy report last month, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair claimed “Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea pose the greatest challenges to the United States’ national interests.” [31]

China and Russia have replaced subjugated Iraq in the ranks of remaining “axis of evil” members Iran and North Korea.

Blair’s report asserted that Russia “may continue to seek avenues for reasserting power and

influence in ways that complicate U.S. interests.” A paraphrase of the document said of “China, which trades regularly with the United States and owns billions of its national debt,” that “Beijing competes for the same resources the United States needs, and is in the process of rapidly modernizing its military.” [32]

In 2006 an article appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, the magazine of the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, called “The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy,” coauthored by Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, which explored in the frankest manner how the U.S. could deal with its Chinese and Russian “challengers.”

As the piece’s title indicates, the focus is on nuclear weapons and America’s superiority in regards to them.

Its basic contention is summarized in this paragraph:

“For four decades, relations among the major nuclear powers have been shaped by their common vulnerability, a condition known as mutual assured destruction. But with the U.S. arsenal growing rapidly while Russia’s decays and China’s stays small, the era of MAD is ending – and the era of U.S. nuclear primacy has begun.” [33]

That appraisal inevitably led to the conclusion that “It will probably soon be possible for the United States to destroy the long-range nuclear arsenals of Russia or China with a first strike.”

The authors examine with coldblooded detachment comparative advancements in each of the U.S.’s triad of nuclear weapons delivery systems – ground-based missile, air and submarine – and how in all three instances Washington could launch crippling first strikes on China and Russia alike.

For example, they state “The U.S. Air Force has finished equipping its B-52 bombers with nuclear-armed cruise missiles, which are probably invisible to Russian and Chinese air-defense radar. And the air force has also enhanced the avionics on its B-2 stealth bombers to permit them to fly at extremely low altitudes in order to avoid even the most sophisticated radar.”

And they list both nation’s vulnerabilities in an almost gleeful manner:

“The more Russia’s nuclear arsenal shrinks, the easier it will become for the United States to carry out a first strike.

“The real U.S. war plan may call for first targeting Russia’s command and control, sabotaging Russia’s radar stations, or taking other preemptive measures – all of which would make the actual U.S. force far more lethal than our model assumes.

“According to our model, such a simplified surprise attack would have a good chance of destroying every Russian bomber base, submarine, and ICBM.

“China’s nuclear arsenal is even more vulnerable to a U.S. attack. A U.S. first strike could succeed whether it was launched as a surprise or in the midst of a crisis during a Chinese alert. China has a limited strategic nuclear arsenal.

“According to unclassified U.S. government assessments, China’s entire intercontinental

nuclear arsenal consists of 18 stationary single-warhead ICBMs.”

To confirm that their study is indicative of not only their own conviction, the authors add that “The improvements to the U.S. nuclear arsenal offer evidence that the United States is actively seeking primacy...The current and future U.S. nuclear force, in other words, seems designed to carry out a preemptive disarming strike against Russia or China.

“The intentional pursuit of nuclear primacy is, moreover, entirely consistent with the United States’ declared policy of expanding its global dominance.”

In view of what has developed in the interim since its publication, the article provides the unadorned truth about so-called missile defense in stating “the sort of missile defenses that the United States might plausibly deploy would be valuable primarily in an offensive context, not a defensive one – as an adjunct to a U.S. first-strike capability, not as a standalone shield. If the United States launched a nuclear attack against Russia (or China), the targeted country would be left with a tiny surviving arsenal – if any at all.

“At that point, even a relatively modest or inefficient missile-defense system might well be enough to protect against any retaliatory strikes, because the devastated enemy would have so few warheads and decoys left.”

The piece ends in acknowledging that with the demise of the Warsaw Pact and any pretense that American and NATO nuclear weapons would be needed against a superior conventional military attack and no further intent, as with Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative, to compel adversaries to spend themselves into bankruptcy on a strategic arms race, “Washington’s continued refusal to eschew a first strike and the country’s development of a limited missile-defense capability take on a new, and possibly more menacing, look. The most logical conclusions to make are that a nuclear-war-fighting capability remains a key component of the United States’ military doctrine and that nuclear primacy remains a goal of the United States.”

As much as words like competition and challenges may factor in the speeches of U.S. and other Western politicians when relating to domestic matters, the White House and the Pentagon will tolerate no serious competition and allow no challengers in their drive for global military, political and economic domination.

When all else fails, and even before, Washington’s ultima ratio consists of its nuclear arsenal and delivery systems.

Notes

- 1) Indo-Asian News Agency, October 12, 2009
- 2) Russian Information Agency Novosti, October 12, 2009
- 3) U.S. Department of Defense, American Forces Press Service, October 6, 2009
- 4) Ibid
- 5) Reuters, October 12, 2009
- 6) Indo-Asian News Agency, October 12, 2009
- 7) Voice of America, October 8, 2009
- 8) BBC News, October 14, 2009
- 9) Agence France-Presse, October 15, 2009
- 10) NATO, October 15, 2009

11) Proliferation Security Initiative And U.S. 1,000-Ship Navy: Control Of World's Oceans, Prelude To War Stop NATO, January 29, 2009

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/08/26/proliferation-security-initiative-and-us-1000-ship-navy-control-of-worlds-oceans-prelude-to-war/>

12) U.S. Accelerates First Strike Global Missile Shield System, Stop NATO, August 19, 2009

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/09/02/u-s-accelerates-first-strike-global-missile-shield-system>

Global Military Bloc: NATO's Drive Into Asia Stop NATO, January 24, 2009

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/08/26/global-military-bloc-natos-drive-into-asia>

13) Australian Military Buildup And The Rise Of Asian NATO, Stop NATO, May 6, 2009

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/08/28/australian-military-buildup-and-the-rise-of-asian-nato>

14) The Australian, October 15, 2009

15) Outlook India, April 10, 2009

16) The Australian, October 15, 2009

17) Ibid

18) Reuters, July 22, 2009

19) Xinhua News Agency, September 27, 2009

20) Radio Taiwan International, October 14, 2009

21) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, October 14, 2009

22) Chosun Ilbo, October 15, 2009

23) Embassy of the United States of America Bangkok, January 13, 2009

24) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, October 14, 2009

25) Ibid

26) EurasiaNet/Eurasia Insight, October 13, 2009

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30) Associated Press, May 1, 2009

31) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, September 16, 2009

32) Ibid

33) The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy, Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press Foreign Affairs, March/April 2006-

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