

US Pressures India to Imitate Europe’s “Self-sabotaging Energy Policy”

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Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar confidently boasted recently that the world has accepted India’s energy policy and bilateral relations with Russia. Jaishankar’s statement prompted US State Department spokesperson Ned Price to say that it is going to be a long-term proposition for New Delhi to reorient foreign policy away from Moscow – but despite the QUAD alliance, India is unlikely to abandon its relations with Russia.

When asked about India increasing its imports of Russian oil and fertilisers and potentially buying the Russian S-400 air defence systems, Ned Price said on August 24:

“It is not for me to speak about another country’s foreign policy. But what I can do is point out what we have heard from India. We have seen countries around the world speak clearly, including with their votes in the UN General Assembly against Russia’s aggression in Ukraine.”

“But we also recognise, as I was saying just a moment ago, that this is not flipping a light switch. This is something that, especially for countries that have historical relationships with Russia. Relationships that, as is the case with India, extend back decades, it is going to be a long-term proposition to re-orient foreign policy away from Russia,” he added.

Although the US and European Union have imposed heavy sanctions on Russia since the military operation in Ukraine began on February 24, India took the opportunity to instead raise oil imports from Russia, ignoring criticism from the West and refusing to go down the path of European self-sabotage.

Berlin recently approved a set of energy-saving measures for the winter which will limit the use of lighting and heating. Germany’s Economy Minister Robert Habeck told reporters that his country wanted to free itself “as quickly as possible from the grip of Russian energy imports.” Instead, Germany finds itself in a position of needing to lower energy use instead

of behaving as the EU's leading country.

Starting from September, public buildings, apart from hospitals and the like, will have heating at a maximum of 19C; public monuments and buildings will also not be lit up for aesthetic reasons; businesses could be banned from keeping their shops illuminated at night; private swimming pool heating could also be banned; and, coal and oil cargo will be given priority over passenger travel on railways.

“We have a shortage situation on the rails right now,” German Transport Minister Volker Wissing said. “That means that if additional fuel transports are temporarily necessary, we would have to prioritize them.”

This European self-sabotage, all for the sake of pretending to defend liberalism in the form of Kiev's authoritarian regime and on instructions from Washington, is a situation that India wants to completely avoid as it continues to progress and develop into a major power.

In May, Russia overtook Saudi Arabia to become India's second-biggest supplier of oil, behind Iraq, as refiners snapped up Russian crude available at major discounts. Indian refiners bought about 25 million barrels of Russian oil in May, ignoring all condemnation from the West and refusing to abandon its decades-old relationship with Moscow, especially as Indians do not forget the West's endless support and backing of Pakistan.

Jaishankar stressed on August 23 that India had not been defensive about its purchases of Russian oil but made the US and others realize instead that the government had the “moral duty” to ensure that the people got the “best deal” – something that European governments do not concern themselves with.

Rather than capitulating to the endless pressures from the West, India has unapologetically steamed ahead with its bilateral relations with Russia. Cards based on Russia's Mir payment system will soon be accepted at ATMs and Point-of-Sale terminals in India as discussions to construct a new financial system independent of the West, that can bypass sanctions on Russia, continue.

Russia also announced its intentions to build the next generation armoured vehicles and submarines in joint collaboration with India. This comes as the delivery of the second regiment of the S-400 missile defence system is already underway.

With India pushing ahead in strengthening relations with Russia in the energy, financial and military sector, the West is forced to exaggerate minor events as if it were a major shift in New Delhi's foreign policy. Western media exaggerated the significance of India voting for the first time against Russia during a “procedural vote” at the United Nations Security Council on Ukraine. The 15-member UN body invited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to address a meeting through a video tele-conference on August 24, something that was only opposed by Moscow and abstained by Beijing.

So far, New Delhi has abstained at the UNSC on Ukraine, with the recent vote being the only exception. This has annoyed the Western powers, led by the US, but this has not stopped them from making a big deal out of India voting to allow Zelensky to speak at the UNSC meeting. This of course does not reflect or signify any Indian foreign policy shift, but is rather a desperate attempt to portray non-existent cracks in New Delhi-Moscow ties. Instead, New Delhi will continue its decades-long cooperation with Moscow, one that has

been long and fruitful.

It is recalled that Jaishankar said in June that “Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems.” Soon Europe will realize, especially Germany, that its energy and financial crisis, spurred on by an ill-thought out Russophobic policy, will certainly not be India’s problem, especially with winter just around the corner.

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