

Indian elite hails US bombings in Syria and Afghanistan

By Deepal Jayasekera
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Underlining its readiness to more closely integrate with Washington's military-strategic agenda, India's ruling elite has hailed the April 7 cruise-missile attack on Syria and the April 13 Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) bombing in Afghanistan.

While Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made no official statement on the US assaults, national upper house parliamentarian Subramanian Swamy, a member of Modi's Hindu-supremacist Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP), tweeted his support.

"In my personal capacity & analysis I welcome US strike against Syria as retaliation for the horrible poisonous chemical attack on civilians," Swamy declared. He thus parroted the bogus US claims that its actions were in response to an alleged Syrian military chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhun in southern Idlib province. The US has failed to provide any evidence to substantiate its allegations against the Assad government.

Notwithstanding Swamy's insistence that his tweet was in a "personal capacity," he is a leading BJP member. This underscores the reality of the Modi government's enthusiastic support for the US attack on Syria.

Swamy later also endorsed Washington's MOAB bombing of Afghanistan—unleashing the most destructive weapon ever used since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He called for the involvement of India in a US-led strategic alliance, including Israel, in the name of fighting "terror."

Swamy tweeted: "US President Trump's blasting with Mother of all bombs the ISIS hideout in Afghanistan is Super. Need US Israel India compact against terror."

Opposition Congress Party national spokesman Manish Tewari likewise welcomed the MOAB attack.

He called for similar bombings in Pakistan to target various Islamic extremist groups and those fighting Indian rule in Kashmir. He tweeted: "If US can drop MOAB on ISIS Khorasan, how is LET, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Jamat-Ul-Dawa any different? Why not one on Muridke? Terror is seamless."

LET (Lashkar-e-Taiba), Jaish-e-Mohammad and Jamat-Ul-Dawa are Kashmir separatist groups operating from Pakistan. Muridke is a commercial city in Pakistan's Punjab province and the operational headquarters of LET. If heeded, Tewari's bloodthirsty calls for Washington to bomb Pakistani cities, towns and villages would result in the death of tens of thousands of innocent civilians.

The US military attacks in Syria and Afghanistan have nothing to do with retaliating against the alleged use of chemical weapons or fighting ISIS terror respectively. Trump used the unprovoked US assaults to make clear to Russia, Iran and China that Washington will not hesitate to use any weapon against perceived adversaries.

This was spelled out on Monday by US Vice President Mike Pence during a visit to South Korea. "In the past two weeks the world witnessed the strength and resolve of our new president in actions taken in Syria and Afghanistan," he declared. "North Korea would do well not to test his resolve or the strength of the armed forces of the United States in this region."

Washington's threats against North Korea are in preparation for military conflict against China, its principal ally.

In their support for the US attacks on Syria and in Afghanistan, the leaders of India's principal parties—the BJP and Congress—are expressing their readiness to line-up with US war preparations and pursue the Indian ruling elite's own global power

ambitions.

India's military-strategic ties with the US were initiated under the BJP Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, from 1998 to 2004, and further developed by the successive Congress governments of Manmohan Singh. Prime Minister Modi has taken this to a qualitatively higher level, transforming India into a "frontline state" in Washington's military-strategic agenda against China.

Irrespective of various tactical differences between the BJP and Congress over how far they should go with Washington in pursuing India's geo-political ambitions, Swamy's and Tewari's remarks underscore the basic agreement in the Indian ruling elite over forging close military ties with US.

Hindu extremist groups associated with the BJP have seized on the US bombing in Afghanistan to push for a similar Indian attack on Pakistan, posing the danger of a major military conflict between these two nuclear-armed South Asian countries, with potentially deadly consequences for millions of people in the region.

Addressing a public event in Jamshedpur on April 14, Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Pravin Togadia declared: "Trump showed how it's 'America First' for him by bombing IS hideouts in Afghanistan, which is more than 10,000 kilometres from Washington. Our government should show similar resolve of 'India First' by bombing Pakistan, which is barely 800 kilometres from New Delhi and securing the Indian soldier's release."

Togadia's call for the release of an Indian soldier is a reference to former Indian navy officer Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was allegedly arrested by Pakistan authorities in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province and sentenced to death by a military court after being accused of espionage.

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