

# India's existential angst to confront Western imperialism

by M. K. Bhadrakumar,\* India



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(Picture ma)

Reserve Bank of India Governor *Sanjay Malhotra's* remark on Wednesday that the US tariff hike is unlikely to have any "major impact" on India's economy, "subject to retaliatory tariffs coming into the picture, which we do not foresee" – and that

even if India cuts back on Russian oil, the impact on domestic inflation may not be severe – can only be seen as a supplementary effort to allay public disquiet.

However, it brings to light the lack of clarity in India about President *Donald Trump's* intentions.

Any assumption that this is a Trumpian temper-tantrum lacks credibility. What if in the hunting ground, Trump is far from a lone ranger? What if he represents the Deep State and is only pursuing a concerted Western agenda dating back by decades?

In a somewhat similar situation during 2014–2022, when the *Biden* administration sought to corner Russia and force it into a bear trap, the entire collective West rallied behind the US leadership. Can anyone guarantee that the developing situation can be any different? These are early days.

To my mind, Trump is captaining the ship which is threatened by an immovable iceberg, and the entire NATO family is on board. Arguably, his compass has been pre-set even before was elected for a second term. Wasn't the NATO Secretary-General *Mark Rutte* the first western leader to raise his voice in an exceptionally harsh cadence that *Modi Govt* was hobnobbing with *Putin*?

Make no mistake, Rutte didn't mince words when he addressed PM Modi personally while talking to reporters in Washington on July 17 as he was walking to Capitol Hill soon after a closed-door meeting with Trump in Oval office.

Rutte said, "President Trump said that if Russia is not serious about peace talks within 50 days, he will slam secondary sanctions on countries like India, China and Brazil. So my encouragement to these three countries particularly is, if you live now in Beijing, or in Delhi, or you are the president of Brazil, you might want to take a look into this, because this might hit you very hard."

Rutte added, "So please make the phone call to Vladimir Putin."

He then went on to announce that the US will now supply Ukraine with weapons "not just air defense, also missiles, also ammunition, paid for by the Europeans."

Did he leave anything to our imagination in his rude remark? Two Indian cabinet ministers responded alright, but in retrospect, Rutte was only articulating Trump's talking points.

The stakes are so high that a Russian victory in Ukraine will most likely finish off NATO, expose the US as a toothless tiger and render the Europeans orphans living under the tutelage of Russia.

Can Trump accept such a humiliating presidential legacy? Conversely, will Putin allow NATO to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat or be party to scripting Trump's triumphalist legacy of having defeated Russian aggression? Please do take note that the word "aggression" reappeared *more than once in the White House website*<sup>1</sup> this week just the way Biden would have wanted.

Simply put, the western agenda to inflict a "strategic defeat" on Russia is still a work in progress and the containment and weakening of Russia is an absolute prerequisite of the situation for NATO. And, for Trump, without NATO underpinning, how would he fortify American hegemony on the world stage, which is under siege?

Indeed, conceptual clarity is crucial that the project that Trump has initiated to clip Modi's

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wings is scripted by the US Deep State and NATO. *Macron, Starmer, Merz, Meloni* – none of them has stepped forward to speak a kind word for India. The sooner we understand this stark reality, the better prepared we will be in the coming period when the summer turns to autumn and to winter.

Lest it gets forgotten, Russia also took things easy until things became bloody serious, and the West simply confiscated Russian reserves in the western banks.

Let us hope things may not come to such a pass. That said, in the western perception, Modi is susceptible to pressure (for whatever reasons) and is one of those Global South satraps who will compromise when the chips are down.

Part of the blame lies with our own sheepish behaviour. After all, didn't India lose enthusiasm for BRICS? Trump understands that the spectre of a BRICS currency will not arise so long as India doggedly blocks it.

Again, why is G7 pampering Indian vanity? And it is working. A last-minute invite relayed on phone was all that was needed for PM to drop everything and rush to Kananaskis for the G7 summit.

This time around, the collective West, led by Trump, is determined to institutionalise India's subaltern role in international politics. Trump is determined to smash to smithereens Indian pretensions of "strategic autonomy" and independent foreign policy.

There must be conceptual clarity while formulating an effective Indian response to the looming Western threat to the country's sovereignty

and Trump's attempt to make India a horrible example in the eyes of the Global South.

The real problem for Modi will be the internal opposition to any radical rethink in India's foreign policies and jettisoning of the pro-Western tilt with a view to give authenticity to its doctrine of strategic autonomy. The moral fibre of the Indian elite has become so weak that a life that doesn't allow hanging out with the Western world is simply unthinkable for them. This was also Putin's problem in some ways, but where Russia scores is that it has a deeply embedded collective consciousness of Western predators through the past millennium since the great schism in the Christian church.

When it comes to America, the Indian elite see it as a home away from home. Unsurprisingly, Modi chose agriculture, dairy and fishery sectors (which are of course a massive vote-bank) to assert his government's grit to stand up to pressure from US negotiators at the ongoing trade talks, but left out geopolitics altogether, which is what is motivating Trump.

The need of the hour at the leadership level is a Hobbesian advocacy of absolute sovereignty as the only kind of government for India that could resolve problems caused by the selfishness of human beings. Gandhiji would not have hesitated a moment in existential angst if confronted with Western imperialism.

Source: <https://www.indianpunchline.com/indias-existential-angst-to-confront-western-imperialism/>, 8 August 2025

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/08/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-addresses-threats-to-the-united-states-by-the-government-of-the-russian-federation/>