

NATO's war summit in Warsaw

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The two-day NATO summit, which opened Friday in Warsaw, marks an extraordinary escalation of the global war drive of the imperialist powers—above all, the economic, political and military campaign against Russia launched two years ago with the US- and German-backed putsch that toppled a pro-Russian government in Ukraine.

The summit's main military objective is to threaten Russia with invasion by massively expanding NATO forces' presence along Russia's borders. More broadly, it seeks to formalize NATO's transformation into an alliance intervening aggressively around the world, beginning with war preparations against Moscow.

The full list of targets identified in NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's opening remarks spans much of the globe. He served notice that NATO would step up military action in Iraq and Syria and expand its deployments in the Mediterranean and across NATO's entire "neighborhood." NATO plans for military action in countries ranging from Libya to Georgia and Ukraine, Afghanistan and the regions bordering China are to be the subject of extensive discussion in Warsaw.

The main focus Friday was the formal ratification of plans to dispatch thousands more NATO troops to Poland and the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—all countries bordering Russia. In remarks made in the presence of Polish President Andrzej Duda, Stoltenberg praised NATO's opening of military headquarters and missile bases across Eastern Europe as well as the tripling of the alliance's rapid response force to 40,000 troops.

"Our presence will be multinational and a clear message that an attack on one ally is an attack on the whole alliance," he declared.

Stoltenberg's rationalization for mass military deployments to Eastern Europe by all of the major NATO powers is extraordinarily reckless and sinister. The best way to secure the NATO alliance, according

to Stoltenberg, is to permanently threaten Russia with nuclear war by ensuring that any local conflict involving Russia in Eastern Europe immediately escalates to all-out conflict between Russia and the entire NATO alliance.

The danger that such a conflict could erupt at any time, whether by design or inadvertently, emerged very directly in last month's massive NATO military exercise, Operation Anaconda, involving 30,000 NATO forces in Poland. Moscow responded by mobilizing a comparable number of troops in western regions of Russia, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced that Moscow reserved the right to take whatever measures were necessary to defend itself.

The arguments advanced by Stoltenberg for a confrontation with Russia are political lies—above all, the claim that Russia's support for pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine proves it is an aggressive power dedicated to military conquest in Europe. He explained yesterday, "We are increasing our military presence in the Baltic countries and Poland, but there is no doubt that it is something we do as a response to what Russia did in Ukraine."

The aggressor in Ukraine was not the Kremlin oligarchy, however, but Washington and Berlin, which ousted an elected pro-Russian government by orchestrating violent, right-wing nationalist protests in Kiev. Top US State Department officials publicly associated themselves with the protests, with Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland boasting that Washington had spent \$5 billion to promote the Ukrainian opposition.

The purpose of these political lies is to present the imperialist powers' war drive as a defensive effort to preserve "peace and stability," even as it threatens to unleash a war of unimaginable dimensions.

The disastrous political and geostrategic consequences of the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution

of the Soviet Union and its restoration of capitalism a quarter century ago are ever more apparent. Far from laying the basis for a peaceful and democratic capitalist development, it was the opening act of a protracted crisis of the entire nation-state system in Europe and internationally.

Twenty-five years after the much heralded victory of the United States in the Cold War—in reality, the product of the final chapter in the decades-long Stalinist betrayal of the Russian Revolution—US and world imperialism have shown mankind the true “benefits” of capitalism: ever increasing social inequality and poverty, the promotion of national chauvinism and racism, the drive to dictatorship, and the looming danger of a nuclear Third World War.

The Warsaw summit’s plans amount to the final repudiation, more or less explicitly, of the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act, in which NATO pledged that it would not exploit the dissolution of the Soviet Union to rearm in Europe and pursue an aggressive strategy against Russia. The act stated that NATO would undergo a “historic transformation,” “radically” reducing its military forces and ensuring that NATO and Russia “not consider each other as adversaries.” In the run-up to the summit, the Polish president called for the formal scrapping of the Founding Act.

Over the last quarter century, the Eastern European countries and the former Soviet republics were thrown open to capitalist exploitation and imperialist intrigue, joining NATO or the European Union. Particularly after the 2014 Kiev putsch, with the emergence of a pro-Western Ukrainian regime, Russia has found itself surrounded by hostile states allied to NATO and thrown back militarily to the positions it held 75 years ago following the Nazi invasion of the USSR.

In this crisis, the policies of all of the bourgeois factions are deeply reactionary. The Kremlin oligarchy’s attempts to use its military to pressure the imperialist powers for an accommodation only heightens the war danger.

A further factor driving the aggressive policies of the imperialist powers is the increasingly bitter and intractable crisis within NATO itself, exacerbated by the June 23 British vote to leave the EU. Washington and several Eastern European states, including Poland, have called for a more accommodating line towards Britain and an even more aggressive policy towards

Russia. Germany, followed by France and Italy, on the other hand, are proposing a more independent foreign policy, i.e., independent of Washington, involving a rapid expulsion of Britain from the EU and a ratcheting down of the confrontation with Russia.

On Friday night, German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s staff tweeted remarks, in direct opposition to the Polish president, insisting that the Russia-NATO Founding Act remained valid.

What these conflicts have revealed is an existential crisis of the entire system of international alliances and all of the institutions of European capitalism. Jochen Bittner, a pro-American German journalist and *New York Times* columnist, aired the concerns over NATO’s fate in a column outlining a scenario in which a Russian conflict with an Eastern European country leads to the destruction of the NATO alliance itself.

He wrote, “Poland and the Baltic countries would call for a strong response to pre-empt another annexation like that of Crimea. The Germans and French would call for negotiations with Moscow... The Greeks, Italians and Spanish would make clear that their economies had already suffered enough from the sanctions on Russia after the annexation of Crimea. And much of the public across Europe, manipulated by Russian propaganda, would ask if the Russians weren’t somehow right...”

The escalating crises of NATO and the EU are a warning and a challenge to the international working class. The unfolding crisis in Europe threatens humanity with a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. Its prevention depends on the working class renewing its links to its revolutionary history and developing a politically conscious international movement against war and for the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of socialism.



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