

US exploits Quad meeting in Australia to condemn Russia

Peter Symonds
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The foreign ministers of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad, a quasi-alliance of the US, Japan, India and Australia, met yesterday in Melbourne amid the mounting danger of a US-triggered war with Russia over the Ukraine.

Under the smokescreen of allegations of Russian “aggression,” the Biden administration is accelerating its dispatch of US troops to Eastern Europe and provision of advanced weaponry to the Ukrainian government. At the same time, the US is continuing to menace China, including through the staging of naval war games in waters off the Chinese mainland.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken used the Quad meeting to once again accuse Russia of an imminent invasion of Ukraine. In a joint media conference after the meeting, he branded Russia’s military threats as a challenge to the rules-based order and declared that it mattered to the Quad, even though the Ukraine was “half a world away.”

Blinken hypocritically declared that he was standing for “very basic principles... like ‘one country’ can’t simply dictate to another its choices, its policies, [or] with whom it will associate.” It is US imperialism, not Russia or China, that has repeatedly resorted to military force and illegal invasions over the past three decades to prop up the post-World War II “rules-based order” in which Washington dictates the international rules to meet its interests.

Significantly, the joint statement did not mention the Ukraine. Moreover, in the joint press conference, Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, unlike Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, refused to endorse Blinken’s attack on Russia.

Jaishankar dodged the issue by declaring that the

Quad “was for something, not against someone.” He said it was focussed on the Indo-Pacific region and referred to India’s position, elaborated in the UN Security Council earlier in the month. At the UN, India declared that the security interests of all countries—that is, including Russia—had to be addressed and called for a peaceful resolution to the confrontation over Ukraine.

Moscow has repeatedly called for security assurances that Ukraine not be permitted to join NATO, putting NATO on Russia’s border. The US has refused point blank to offer such a guarantee and instead is exploiting the crisis to justify its military build-up in Eastern Europe.

The failure of the Quad to concur over Ukraine did not stop the four powers from targeting China, despite the Indian minister’s claim that the grouping was not directed “against” anyone. The Biden administration elevated the status of the Quad by convening the first-ever leaders’ summit last September in Washington, as part of its strengthening of US alliances and partnerships against Beijing.

In an interview with the *Australian*, Blinken openly expressed the fear that China would eclipse the United States, declaring: “There’s little doubt that China’s ambition over time is to be the leading military, economic, diplomatic and political power not just in the region but in the world.” But, he added, highlighting Washington’s aims at the Quad meeting, the US and its allies were a more formidable coalition than the emerging China-Russia alignment.

While posturing as the defender of “liberal values” against the “illiberalism” of China and Russia, Blinken blurted out that Washington’s real goal was to bring together “literally dozens of allies and partners through NATO, through the EU, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and, of course, here in the

Indo-Pacific, with our closest allies, whether it's Australia, Japan, South Korea" against Beijing and Moscow.

The US secretary of state boasted that "we are constantly putting new coalitions, new partnerships, together, whether it's the Quad or AUKUS." The US, Britain and Australia announced the formation of the AUKUS pact last September in another move that was aimed against China—an alliance that included the arming of Australia with nuclear-powered submarines.

While the acquisition of the submarines has been mooted as decades away, Blinken in his interview said the Biden administration was determined to find a way for Australia to get nuclear-propelled submarines as soon as possible. There is nothing defensive about Australia acquiring nuclear-powered attack submarines. Their only purpose is work alongside the US Navy in the event of a war against, or a blockade of, China.

Blinken added that AUKUS was about much more than submarines. It included collaborating on critical technologies and "building supply chain resilience"—that is, ensuring key supplies in the event of war. He said the US and Australia already had "a comprehensive and extensive security partnership" before AUKUS. This alliance has greatly intensified over the past decade to include critical basing arrangements that turn Australia into a vital platform for the US military in any conflict with China.

The joint statement issued from the Quad meeting was replete with platitudes about the collaboration of the four countries in providing COVID-19 vaccines to the Indo-Pacific region and sending disaster aid to Tonga after its huge volcanic eruption. These are initiatives aimed at countering Chinese influence. The statement also expressed concerns about the "crisis in Myanmar," without condemning the military junta, and about North Korea's missile tests.

Even though China was not named, the central thrust of the meeting was undoubtedly directed against Beijing. Greg Sheridan, foreign editor for the *Australian*, put the matter bluntly in his comment today, entitled "Quad's unity puts China on notice." He wrote: "Everyone knows that the Quad is designed to make sure that Beijing cannot exercise hegemony over a large part of the Indo-Pacific."

Sheridan, who is well-connected in Washington, is parroting its propaganda. The US accuses China of

expansionism in the South China Sea and aggression toward Taiwan, but it is the US that, in the name of freedom of navigation, continues to escalate its naval provocations in the South China and East China Seas in waters vital to Chinese security.

The Quad likewise proclaimed the need to "advance a free and open Indo-Pacific," adding: "We reiterate the importance of adherence to international law, particularly as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to meet challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including in the South and East China Seas."

Significantly, in its invocation of UNCLOS, the Quad neglected to point out that one of those sitting around the table—namely the United States—has not ratified the UN Convention because it conflicts with its own maritime interests.

The Quad meeting demonstrates once again the accelerating pace of US war preparations. It is pushing Russia to the brink of war in Eastern Europe while continuing its war drive against China—all fuelled by a deepening economic, social and political crisis at home. The danger is that regardless of how a conflict starts, it will rapidly expand to engulf the world.



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