

NATO summit to embrace US-led confrontation with China

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Amid the US-led proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, a major focus of the NATO summit beginning today in Madrid will be the extension of the Atlantic military alliance to the Asia-Pacific, directed against China. NATO's agenda derives directly from Washington's rapidly intensifying and aggressive confrontation with Beijing, which the US regards as the chief threat to its global dominance.

During a press conference yesterday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg declared that the summit would directly address China for the first time, and “the challenges that Beijing poses to our security, interests, and values.” He said NATO members would “consider our response to Russia and China's increasing influence in our southern neighbourhood”—that is, the Indo-Pacific region, on the other side of the globe, thousands of kilometres from the nearest NATO member.

While Stoltenberg's language was guarded, what is proposed is an extraordinary expansion of NATO's scope across the entire world, making clear that the escalating US-NATO proxy war against Russia is not a limited, episodic conflict in Europe, but global in character. The massive expansion of NATO military forces slated to be discussed at the summit is not just directed against Russia, but China as well.

In preparation for the summit, Stoltenberg flew to the US in early June to hold talks with both US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. Not surprisingly, he is parroting Washington's propaganda.

Even as basic democratic rights are being eviscerated in the US and Europe, Stoltenberg, in a media forum hosted by *Politico* last week, painted the conflict with Russia and China as a rising competition “between democracy and authoritarianism,” adding “Moscow

and Beijing are openly contesting the rules-based international order.” In reality, the US is seeking to preserve the post-World War II order, in which it set the rules, through military means.

Like Washington, the NATO chief told the forum that he was concerned “at the rise of China, the fact that they're investing heavily in new modern military equipment, including scaling significantly their nuclear capabilities, investing in key technologies, and trying also to control critical infrastructure in Europe coming closer to us.”

The NATO summit will revise its Strategic Concept, which has been in place since 2010 and makes no mention of China. The new document, in line with the Pentagon's strategic orientation, will be focussed, not only on the “war on terrorism,” but as NATO deputy secretary general Mircea Geoană, told a conference in Copenhagen on June 10, on great power competition—particularly on Russia and China.

Significantly, the leaders of four Asia-Pacific countries—Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea—will attend the NATO summit for the first time. Australia, Japan and South Korea are all formal US military allies, while Australia and Japan are part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad, along with the US and India, that is targeting China.

Recently-installed Australian Labor Party prime minister, Anthony Albanese, on landing in Madrid immediately reiterated his government's support for the NATO proxy war, and expressed concern about China “becoming increasingly aggressive” and its “closeness” to Russia. He said Australia would welcome increased military cooperation with other members of the “Asia-Pacific Four”—that is, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand. A meeting has been mooted of the leaders of those four countries on the

sidelines of the summit.

Since being sworn in last month, the Australian Labor government has been engaged in frenetic diplomatic activity in the Asia-Pacific—including taking part in a Quad leaders meeting in Tokyo while barely in office, and despatching Foreign Minister Penny Wong to Pacific Island states in a bid to counter Chinese influence in the region. The new government has fully endorsed the AUKUS pact with the US and Britain, aimed against China, that will arm Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines.

On Sunday, speaking at the G7 leaders meeting, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida made a thinly-veiled swipe at China. He declared that a united front was necessary to prevent other countries drawing the “wrong lessons” from Russia’s war in Ukraine. Japan has joined the US and other allies in accusing China of preparing to invade Taiwan as the pretext for strengthening ties with the island which all nominally accept, under the One China policy, is part of China.

Beijing is deeply concerned at aggressive US-led efforts to build military alliances, strategic partnerships and basing arrangements throughout the Indo-Pacific in conjunction with NATO. Speaking at the BRICS summit of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa last week, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for a rejection of “Cold War mentality” and warned against the type of crippling unilateral sanctions imposed by the US and allies on Russia.

Last Thursday, Chinese foreign affairs ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin explicitly accused NATO of engaging in a “highly dangerous” effort to create hostile blocs in Asia. “NATO has already disrupted stability in Europe. It should not try to do the same to the Asia-Pacific and the whole world,” he said.

The shift by NATO toward a confrontation with China as well as Russia is bound up with the sharp escalation in geo-political tensions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and growing economic and financial instability. Previously the European powers sought to balance their economic ties with China with their military alliance with the US. Now they have joined in the US-led war against Russia in Ukraine, while also preparing to play a far greater military role in the Indo-Pacific.

In 2019, China was referenced for the first time in a NATO summit in a sentence declaring that Beijing

presented “both opportunities and challenges.” In 2021, however, a joint NATO communique adopted a sharply different approach, accusing China of “systemic challenges to the rules-based international order.”

Last year Britain joined the AUKUS alliance and has begun the deployment of warships to the South China Sea off the Chinese mainland. France and Germany also have despatched warships through these sensitive strategic waters.

The NATO summit marks a sharp turning point in the accelerating proxy war with Russia, and the involvement of the US military allies in Europe in Washington’s aggressive confrontation with China—posing the very real danger of a global war between nuclear-armed powers.



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