

NATO to expand Asia-Pacific presence by opening office in Japan

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Last week, news emerged that NATO intends to open a liaison office in Tokyo, Japan next year. The office would be NATO's first in the Asia-Pacific region and represents the increasing role of the organisation in preparation for a US-led war against China. Both Tokyo and NATO have confirmed the plans.

Nikkei Asia reported on May 3 that NATO's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg discussed opening the office with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during Stoltenberg's visit to Japan in January. Similar offices exist at the United Nations in New York and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Vienna, as well as in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kuwait. Tokyo also intends to create an independent mission to NATO by separating its current mission from its embassy in Belgium and dispatching a new ambassador.

While the move does not mean Japan is joining the alliance, the new NATO office in Tokyo is a major provocation directed at China. The US/NATO war against Russia in Ukraine was instigated, in part, through the encroachment of NATO's borders towards Russia. NATO's collaboration with countries like Japan, coupled with attempts to goad Beijing by challenging the "One China" policy over Taiwan, will only heighten the danger of war.

The Danish ambassador to Japan, Peter Taksoe-Jensen, who acts as the contact point between Tokyo and NATO, made clear that the decision to open the liaison office was directed against China and preventing it from becoming an economic challenger to the West.

He told *Nikkei Asia*, "In 2022, at the (NATO) Madrid Summit, allied leaders decided that Russia was no longer a partner but a foe, and that there was also an acknowledgement that China's rise would and could

have an impact on trans-European security."

Beijing's Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Mao Ning criticised the plans for the new liaison office in Tokyo, saying, "NATO's continual eastward expansion in the Asia-Pacific, interference in regional affairs, attempts to destroy regional peace and stability, and push for bloc confrontation calls for high vigilance from countries in the region."

NATO and Japan also intend to sign an Individually Tailored Partnership Program (ITPP) ahead of the July 11 and 12 NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania. Japan, as well as South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand is expected to attend the summit. The liaison office will facilitate increased cooperation between NATO and these four countries, dubbed the Asia-Pacific partners of NATO, or AP4. The meeting last year in Madrid was the first time the four nations had been invited to attend a NATO summit.

As part of their collaboration, Japan and NATO will also work together to address "cyber threats, disruptive technologies, and disinformation activities." In other words, the two will work on ensuring that the internet and social media are employed to spread imperialist propaganda while blocking workers and youth from accessing so-called "disinformation," including socialist, anti-imperialist and anti-war viewpoints.

The opening of the office is part of a broader agenda in which the US is developing and integrating a series of alliances meant to surround China. These include the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), comprised of the US, Australia, India, and Japan, and the AUKUS alliance, made up of Australia, the United Kingdom and the US. Washington and Seoul also recently announced increased collaboration over the planning and use of Washington's nuclear arsenal.

In addition, under pressure from Washington, Tokyo

and Seoul have worked to ease tensions that have existed between the two countries for years. Following a summit in Tokyo in March between Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, the two sides agreed to increased cooperation, normalisation of a military intelligence-sharing agreement and more military drills alongside the US.

Japan is also increasing its cooperation with other countries, including the UK. Tokyo signed a Reciprocal Access Agreement with London in January granting troops from each country easier access to enter the other. Tokyo is considering a similar agreement with the Philippines.

The opening of the NATO office in Japan also contributes to Tokyo's goal of remilitarisation. In 2014, the then-Shinzo Abe administration announced a "reinterpretation" of the constitution to allow so-called "collective self-defense." The following year, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rammed legislation through parliament to codify this change. This, Tokyo argues, allows Japan to go to war alongside an ally in the name of "self-defense," thereby sidestepping Article 9 of the constitution, which explicitly bars Japan from maintaining a military or waging war.

By working alongside NATO, Tokyo will claim that its growing military assertiveness and aggression aligns with this bogus and unconstitutional concept of "collective self-defense."

Along these lines, a NATO delegation visited Japan from April 24-26, led by its Cooperative Security Division Director Lieutenant General Francesco Diella, who met with leading Japanese military officials. Diella claimed during these discussions, "Our security is deeply interconnected and so must be our cooperation, which is rooted in our shared values, and our shared vision—of a free, peaceful and prosperous world."

The claims that NATO and its member countries as well as Japan represent "shared values" is aimed against Russia and China. Washington, Tokyo and their allies claim that in Asia, China represents a threat to the "free and open" Indo-Pacific. In reality, the imperialist powers denounce Beijing for not acquiescing to the post-World War II order established and dominated by the US. While Washington conducts provocative and dangerous "freedom of navigation" operations on China's doorstep, any reaction from Beijing is

denounced as proof of Chinese "aggression."

Furthermore, the claims that NATO and, above all, the United States represent "democratic values" fly in the face of reality. In the US, immigrants are denied the right to asylum while police regularly gun down workers and the poor. In France, the president of the rich, Emmanuel Macron, rules using police state repression against striking workers and protesters. In the UK, journalist Julian Assange remains behind bars in Belmarsh Prison for exposing the crimes of US imperialism while the government wasted hundreds of millions of pounds on King Charles's recent coronation ceremony.

In Japan, past war crimes are covered up in order to promote remilitarisation. The ruling LDP, with no genuine opposition from other parties, is pursuing constitutional amendments that would severely restrict democratic rights, and journalists face barriers and even harassment.

Ultimately, Washington, Tokyo, and NATO's goal is not defense of "democratic values," but the redivision of the Indo-Pacific at the expense of China, risking a new world war that would be fought with nuclear weapons.



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