

NATO moves to formalise anti-China “partnership” with Indo-Pacific nations

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As last week’s NATO summit was planning direct military intervention against nuclear-armed Russia, the imperialist powers moved to forge closer ties with so-called “partner” countries in the Indo-Pacific region in order to prepare for war with China.

For the third year in a row, leaders or their deputies from Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia (the IP4)—all non-NATO members—were invited to attend the summit in Washington. The White House said it welcomed the attendance of the Indo-Pacific countries because the “threats and challenges” among the regions are interconnected.

The IP4 group met during the summit and issued a provocative joint statement agreeing to “strongly condemn the illicit military cooperation” between Russia and North Korea and to launch “cooperative” projects on Ukraine, “disinformation,” cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

The summit communiqué, approved by all 32 NATO members, included condemnation of China as “a decisive enabler of Russia’s war against Ukraine” and demanded that it halt shipments of “weapons components” to Russia. It also expressed concerns over Beijing’s nuclear arsenal and its capabilities in space.

These bellicose statements against China make clear that NATO is preparing for war on a global scale. Associated Press (AP) reported that in an interview with the South Korean news agency Yonhap, US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said Washington wants to “institutionalize” the group of four countries as it “refocuses” its attention in the region.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the Brookings Institution a week earlier that the Biden administration had been working to break down barriers between European alliances, Asian coalitions and other partners worldwide. “That’s part of the new landscape, the new geometry that we’ve put in place,” he declared.

Meeting with the IP4, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that their “shared security challenges” included “Russia’s war against Ukraine, China’s support for Russia’s war economy and the growing alignment of authoritarian powers.”

Stoltenberg told the group: “We must work even more closely together to preserve peace and protect the rules-based international order. Our security is not regional. It is global.” The “rules,” which have nothing to do with maintaining “peace,” are those by which the US maintains its global hegemony.

Beijing insists that it has maintained trade with Moscow but does not provide Russia with military aid. Highlighting NATO’s hypocrisy, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian noted that over 60 percent of Russia’s imported military components originate from the US and other Western countries while 95 percent of Russia’s key military items destroyed by Ukraine come from the West.

China’s official statement further accused NATO of over reaching and inciting confrontation in the Indo-Pacific. Lin Jian flatly declared; “Let me make it clear once again that China is not the creator of the Ukraine crisis nor a party to it. ... Don’t bring instability to the Asia-Pacific after it has done so to Europe.”

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told the IP4 he would promote a foundation for a “long, lasting collaboration” between NATO and its Indo-Pacific partners. Kishida told reporters that Japan and NATO would “reinforce” procedures for sharing highly sensitive intelligence and that Japan would conduct a joint exercise with NATO in the Euro-Atlantic region.

According to *Foreign Policy*, some NATO members are reviving the call for a permanent NATO office in Tokyo to give the alliance a permanent footprint in the Indo-Pacific. Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said in an interview: “The question of security in the Euro-

Atlantic region and Indo-Pacific are not just closely interlinked—they are two sides of the same coin.”

NATO first floated the idea of a Tokyo office last year at the urging of Stoltenberg, who had set up a China team at the alliance’s headquarters in Brussels. The proposal was shot down at the time by French President Emmanuel Macron, who claimed that putting a NATO office on China’s doorstep would raise tensions with Beijing. That view is now under challenge by European leaders who, according to *Foreign Policy*, want to “plant NATO’s flag” in Asia.

Amid US-led preparations for war with China, Japan is itself cementing bilateral “security” deals with other countries in the region. The Foreign and Defense Ministers of the Philippines and Japan this month signed an agreement allowing the deployment of Japanese military forces to the Philippines for training and joint military exercises.

In June, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and his Japanese counterpart, Fumio Kishida, also announced a new “Information Security Agreement which provides a framework for sharing classified information.” The two leaders agreed to increase joint “activities and exercises, including in the area of maritime security.”

The pacts mark a milestone in the return of Japanese imperialism to Southeast Asia and raise the possibility that Japan could join the top-level “Five Eyes” security alliance involving the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

South Korea and Japan are currently both sending military supplies and aid to Ukraine. Japan, South Korea and Australia are all on the road to committing two percent of GDP to their respective militaries. New Zealand is under pressure, particularly from Canberra, to do the same.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told the summit that when President Biden came to office, nine US allies were meeting the NATO commitment of at least 2 percent of their GDP on defence. “Today, as we enter the Washington Summit and the 75th anniversary of NATO, 23 Allies are investing 2 percent,” Sullivan boasted.

According to AP, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol told the IP4 that solidarity among “like-minded” countries has become more important than ever when facing interlinked challenges such as the war in Ukraine and “provocations” from Pyongyang. Yoon welcomed an airworthiness certification from NATO for Korean

aircraft which would ensure “mutual military compatibility.”

Meeting with Ukrainian President Zelensky, Australia’s Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles announced Canberra’s largest single military assistance package, worth nearly \$A250 million (\$US167 million) for Ukraine. The package includes guided and air defence missiles, anti-tank weapons and ammunition.

The Australian Defence Force will also sign on as an “operational partner” to the new NATO command for Ukraine, and a group of military personnel stationed in Europe will transfer to the 700-person initiative. The Labor government’s commitment brings the value of Australia’s overall support to \$A1.3 billion, including \$1.1 billion for Ukraine’s military. “This will not be the last package that we announce,” Marles said.

New Zealand also signed its own partnership program with NATO, with Stoltenberg writing on X that it would take cooperation to “unprecedented levels.” Luxon committed a further \$NZ16 million to Ukraine, bringing New Zealand’s total financial contribution since 2022 to more than \$130 million, with more promised in the coming months.

Addressing the compliant New Zealand media, Luxon regurgitated the propaganda and falsehoods produced by NATO to justify its warmongering. “I want to underscore that Ukraine is fighting for democracy and it’s something we believe in,” he said. “Either we stand up for values in our liberal democracy or we don’t. We cannot have Ukraine lose this war, that is unacceptable and that’s why you’ve seen us continue to support Ukraine,” Luxon declared

The hypocrisy of the IP4 leaders’ pretence of defending “democracy” has exposed the anti-democratic character of the fascist Ukrainian regime as well as their continued backing of Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza.

As the WSWS has explained, the escalating wars in Ukraine, the Middle East and the looming war against China are not separate conflicts, but the opening shots in a world war involving nuclear armed powers, which threatens catastrophe for all mankind.



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