

NATO summit in The Hague: A milestone on the way to a third world war

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The NATO summit, which took place on Tuesday and Wednesday in The Hague, Netherlands, will go down in history as a milestone in the imperialist powers' slide toward a third world war. The 31 members of the world's most powerful military alliance agreed on the most comprehensive rearmament of Europe since World War II.

Instead of the current 2 percent, they want to spend 5 percent of GDP on war purposes within 10 years at the latest: 3.5 percent on purely military expenditures such as troops and weapons, and another 1.5 percent on expanded measures such as cybersecurity, infrastructure, and the construction of barracks. Instead of US \$1.5 trillion in 2024, NATO would then spend US \$2.8 trillion on military purposes, not taking into account growth and inflation. That is more than the entire annual economic output of Canada or Italy.

The increase in military spending is justified, on the one hand, by pressure from the US, which currently spends more on military purposes than all other NATO members combined, and has long been pushing for them to take on a larger share. On the other hand, the "long-term threat posed by Russia to Euro-Atlantic security and the persistent threat of terrorism," as stated in the summit declaration, serves as another justification.

Both obscure the deeper causes of the misuse of ever-increasing amounts of society's resources for the purpose of destruction and annihilation. The summit took place amid escalating wars for which NATO bears responsibility.

Just a few days prior to the summit, Israel and the US launched an assault on Iran in violation of international law, assassinating dozens of military leaders, politicians and scientists, killing numerous civilians, and destroying military and nuclear facilities. But even

though the Europeans were not even consulted beforehand, they celebrated the barbaric attack.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte wrote in a private text message to US President Donald Trump: "Congratulations and thank you for your decisive action in Iran, that was truly extraordinary, and something no one else dared to do. It makes us all safer." Trump immediately published the message on his social media channel. The Israeli genocide in Gaza, which continues unabated, is also supported by NATO members.

The European powers—especially the so-called E3: Germany, France and Britain—are determined to continue the war against Russia at any cost, even if Ukraine is militarily and financially exhausted. A significant part of the summit preparations was aimed at keeping the US on board and preventing Trump from pulling out of the war and reaching an agreement with Putin over the heads of the Europeans.

In reality, it is not Russia that threatens Europe, but the other way around. NATO's steady advance into Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union provoked Russia's reactionary invasion of Ukraine. Putin had always warned that the integration of the country, with its 2,000-kilometer border with Russia, into NATO was a red line that he would not tolerate being crossed.

The aggressive war policy of the US and the Europeans is also exacerbating conflicts within NATO itself. Trump is imposing punitive tariffs on his European "partners" and threatening them with the annexation of Greenland. They are not arming themselves to do him a favor, but to stand on their own two feet militarily and pursue their imperialist interests independently—if necessary, even against the US.

The summit in The Hague was a crisis summit, and it may have been the last of its kind. No expense was

spared to cover this up and avoid an abrupt break. Around 9,000 participants, including 45 heads of state and government and just as many foreign and defense ministers, attended a meeting that was essentially limited to a dinner with the king and—out of consideration for Trump—a two-and-a-half-hour working session. Cost: €183 million. Large parts of The Hague were cordoned off.

Rutte flattered the would-be dictator Trump with obsequious words that would make even a Byzantine courtier blush. Not only did he praise him for attacking Iran, he also wrote:

You are flying into another big success in The Hague this evening. It was not easy but we've got them all signed onto 5 percent!

Donald, you have driven us to a really, really important moment for America and Europe, and the world. You will achieve something NO American president in decades could get done.

Europe is going to pay in a BIG way, as they should, and it will be your win.

The summit's final declaration was limited to five short paragraphs. In 2023 in Vilnius, there had been 90, and in 2024 in Washington, 44. The aim was to avoid open disagreements or Trump changing his mind again on the flight home.

The Declaration reaffirms "our ironclad commitment to collective defence as enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty," which Trump had called into question during his flight to the summit.

However, there was no declaration of support for Ukraine from NATO, nor was there any mention of Ukraine's accession to NATO. A year ago, the Washington Declaration stated: "Ukraine's future lies in NATO." The Hague Declaration now states: "Allies [i.e., individual member states and not NATO as a whole] reaffirm their enduring sovereign commitments to provide support to Ukraine, whose security contributes to ours."

The increase in military spending to 5 percent, which for many European countries means a tripling of their budgets, places fierce social attacks and class struggles on the agenda. They will decide whether the

warmongers prevail or the working class gains the upper hand.

Germany, which has financial leeway thanks to a low debt ratio of 63 percent, is trying to leverage this somewhat through massive new borrowing. The government has presented a budget plan that aims to achieve the 5 percent target in just five years.

But other countries, that are already heavily indebted, do not have this option. The United Kingdom and Spain, with debt ratios of 100 percent, Belgium with 105 percent and France with 113 percent, have not yet presented any financing plans. They will have to cut social spending much more quickly and ruthlessly in order to achieve the NATO target.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez initially refused to agree to the 5 percent target, but relented after Trump berated him and Rutte then offered him a face-saving compromise.



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