

# NATO accelerates its conflict with China

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At the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Washington, the focus

was on Ukraine. In the Washington Declaration, the NATO leaders [wrote](#), “Ukraine’s future is in NATO.” Ukraine formally [applied](#) to join NATO in September 2022, but soon found that despite widespread NATO support, several member states (such as Hungary) were uneasy with escalating a conflict with Russia. As early as NATO’s 2008 Bucharest Summit, the members [welcomed](#) “Ukraine’s and Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO.” However, the NATO council hesitated because of the border dispute with Russia; if Ukraine had been hastily brought into NATO and if the border dispute escalated (as it did), then NATO would be dragged into a direct war against Russia.

Over the last decade, NATO has expanded its military presence along Russia’s borders. At the NATO summit in Wales (September 2014), NATO [implemented](#) its Readiness Action Plan (RAP). This RAP was [designed](#) to increase NATO’s military forces in Eastern Europe “from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south.” Two years later, in Warsaw, NATO decided to [develop](#) an enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the Baltic Sea area with “battlegroups stationed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.” The distance between Moscow and the border regions of Estonia and Latvia is a mere 780 kilometers, which is well within the range of a short-range ballistic missile (1,000 kilometers). In response to the NATO build-up, Belarus and Russia [conducted](#) Zapad 2017, the largest military exercise by these countries since 1991. Reasonable people at that time would have thought that de-escalation should have become the priority on all sides. But it was not.

Provocations from the NATO member states continued. After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the NATO countries settled on a course of fully backing Ukraine and preventing any negotiations toward a peaceful settlement of the dispute. The United States and its NATO allies sent arms and equipment to Ukraine, with U.S. high military officials making provocative statements about their war aims (to “[weaken Russia](#),” for instance). Ukrainian [discussions](#) with Russian officials in

Belarus and Turkey were set aside by NATO, and Ukraine's own war aim (merely for Russian forces to withdraw) was ignored. Instead, NATO countries spent billions of dollars on weapons and watched on the sidelines as Ukrainian soldiers died in a futile war. On the sidelines of the NATO summit in Washington, Royal Netherlands Navy Admiral Rob Bauer, who is the chair of NATO's Military Committee, [told](#) Foreign Policy, "The Ukrainians need more to win than just what we have set up." In other words, the NATO states provide Ukraine with just enough weapons to continue the conflict, but not to change the situation on the ground (either by a victory or a defeat). The NATO states, it seems, want to use Ukraine to bleed Russia.

## **Blame China**

NATO's Washington Declaration contains a section that is puzzling. It says that China "has become a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine." The term "decisive enabler" has attracted significant attention within China, where the government immediately condemned NATO's characterization of the war in Ukraine. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian [said](#) that NATO's statement "is ill-motivated and makes no sense." Shortly after Russian troops entered Ukraine, China's Wang Wenbin of the Foreign Ministry [said](#) that "all countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected and upheld." This is precisely the opposite of cheerleading for the war, and since then China has put forward [peace proposals](#) to end the war. Accusations that China has supplied Russia with "lethal aid" have not been substantiated by the NATO countries, and have been [denied](#) by China.

Lin Jian asked two key questions at the July 11, 2024, press conference in Beijing: "Who exactly is fueling the flames? Who exactly is 'enabling' the conflict?". The answer is clear since it is NATO that rejects any peace negotiations, NATO countries that are arming Ukraine to prolong the war, and NATO leaders who want to expand NATO eastwards and deny Russia's plea for a new security architecture (all of this is

demonstrated by German parliamentarian Sevim Dağdelen in her new [book](#) on NATO's 75-year history). When Hungary's Viktor Orban—whose country holds the six-month presidency of the European Union—went to both Russia and Ukraine to talk about a peace process, it was the European states that condemned this mission. Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, responded with a harsh rebuke of Orban, [writing](#) that “Appeasement will not stop Putin.” Alongside such comments come further promises by the Europeans and the North Americans to provide Ukraine with funds and weapons for the war. Strikingly, the new NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte even allowed Ukraine to use an F-16 jet from the Netherlands [given](#) to Ukraine when Rutte was the prime minister of that country to strike Russian soil. That would mean that weapons from a NATO country would be used directly to attack Russia, which would allow Russia to strike back at a NATO state.

NATO's statement that characterizes China as a “decisive enabler” permitted the Atlantic alliance to defend its “out of area” operation in the South China Sea as part of its defense of its European partners. That is what permitted NATO to say, as outgoing Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [said](#) in a press conference, that NATO must “continue to strengthen our partnerships, especially in the Indo-Pacific.” These Indo-Pacific Partners [are](#) Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. Interestingly, the largest trading partner of three of these countries is not the United States, but China (Japan is the outlier). Even the analysts of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank have [concluded](#) that “a delinking of global production processes and consumption from China is not in sight.” Despite this, these countries have recklessly increased the pressure against China (including New Zealand, which is now [eager](#) to join Pillar II of the AUKUS Treaty among Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom). NATO has said that it remains open to “constructive engagement” with China, but there is no sign of such a development.

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