

Smash NATO!

By Yorick F., June 2025 - 7 minutes reading time

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War preparations are in full swing: the plan of the 2025 NATO summit is not only the practical coordination of a confrontation with its strategic rival Russia, but above all a massive rearmament of NATO countries to 5% (!) of GDP. In Germany, that would mean around 215 billion euros - roughly half of the federal budget - in military spending every year. At the same time, the summit is likely to be a place where the internal contradictions of NATO and the different interests behind various ideas for its long-term direction will become apparent. In order to discuss tactics against the summit, its actors and decisions, it is therefore important to be aware of these contradictions and to take a look at the history and present of NATO.

Founding and early years

NATO emerged from the quarrels of the post-world war two order. The United States did not enter the Second World War until 1941, with the aim of containing the Soviet Union's growing influence after the defeat of fascism and securing its own supremacy.

After the liberation of Europe, a fragile post-war order prevailed in which both superpowers suppressed any independent revolutionary movement that flared up in many countries. Even before the end of the war, the US was preparing NATO, replacing Great Britain as the world's most powerful nation and cementing its position through Bretton Woods, which tied the dollar to gold and made it a secure global currency. At the same time, the IMF, NATO's financial arm, was created, which to this day serves as a key tool for the economic exploitation and suppression of semi-colonial countries.

These instruments were part of the containment policy against the Soviet Union, which led directly to the founding of NATO - from the very beginning

an alliance of imperialism against the USSR. Founding members alongside the United States were Canada, France, Great Britain, Norway, the Netherlands and Portugal.

However, NATO cannot simply be understood as an extension of the United States, as it was marked from the outset by conflicts between its members; France withdrew in 1966 and expelled 40,000 soldiers. Such tensions, later between Greece and Turkey, for example, remained characteristic.

Collapse of Stalinism and the 'War on Terror'

During the Cold War, NATO mainly fought proxy wars against the Soviet Union or movements supported by it, such as in Vietnam and Afghanistan.

This changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state in 1991, when not only did the bipolar world order die, but soon the new powers of China and Russia rose from the ruins, heralding a new era of imperialism. The balance of power also shifted within the alliance: the Federal Republic of Germany grew beyond its role as a junior partner of the US through the annexation of the GDR and formed an EU bloc with France. The precondition for the 'reunification' of Germany was the consent of the Soviet Union. In the 2+4 Treaty, Washington promised not to expand eastwards. Nevertheless, twelve countries joined NATO by 2009, and US troops advanced to Russia's border. At the same time, Germany repeatedly sought rapprochement with Moscow in order to gain some independence from Washington.

Under US leadership, NATO adopted a new doctrine in the 1990s: mobile units were to combat 'failed states' and terrorist organisations. Since then, instead of mass armies, smaller, specialised, well-trained and well-equipped intervention forces have dominated. The bloody missions in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Afghanistan are clear evidence of this. All of them were also legitimised as 'humanitarian interventions' or, especially after 11 September 2001, as 'the war on terror'. Anti-Muslim racism became the key ideology of most Western imperialist states and continues to serve as a tool for dividing domestic politics and legitimising crimes such as torture prisons in Iraq, the

slaughter of civilians in Afghanistan and the genocide in Gaza.

NATO today

In the wake of the intensifying imperialist bloc formation, NATO faces new tasks. Even if one cannot speak of a 'new Cold War' with Russia or, rather, China as the main strategic rival, since there is no fundamental conflict between the economic systems, the challenges facing NATO are increasingly similar to those of past confrontations. Plans such as the so-called 'Operation Plan Germany,' discussions about the reintroduction of conscription in various NATO states, and, not least, the 5% target formulated for the summit show that NATO is preparing for the possibility of a large-scale inner-imperialist land war. The units designed for earlier NATO missions – well equipped but designed for other scenarios – would not be sufficient for this. In almost all NATO countries, whether in the United States, the Netherlands or Germany, this rearmament is accompanied by social cuts, attacks on the working class and youth, massive racist mobilisation and a global shift to the right.

However, this does not mean that there is harmony within NATO or that it can be understood as a unified 'empire' or super-imperialism. On the contrary, especially with Trump's re-election, the alliance faces strategically explosive issues in which member states pursue different interests. In the wake of the Ukraine war, the US succeeded in integrating Germany, which had previously been strategically oriented towards Russia, more firmly into its own bloc and subordinating it. However, this did not happen without opposition and is by no means secure. For the EU states, Russia is the central competitor following the breakdown of trade relations with Moscow, while Trump sees China as a long-term threat. He is therefore seeking a rapid 'pacification' of the war in Ukraine through the imperialist appropriation of Ukrainian resources in order to free up capacity for the genocide in Gaza and a possible confrontation with China.

Against this backdrop, Europe's independent militarisation can only be understood in terms of its contradictions: on the one hand, as an attempt to gain independence and establish itself as an independent actor; on the other

hand, as a demand by the United States on states such as Germany. NATO is and has always been a contradictory alliance of states—clearly dominated by US imperialism, but also with an internal rivalry with a bloc around Germany and France.

How to (not) fight NATO?

For us as revolutionaries, it is clear: NATO must be smashed! We reject it as an organ of imperialism and see the struggle against it and its wars as an important field of work. At the same time, we must be clear that there can be no exclusive struggle against NATO in order to be successful. Those who do not want to talk about class struggle in the fight against NATO quickly end up with illusions in other institutions of the imperialist states, such as the UN, or in the idea of a 'peaceful' multipolar world order - ultimately, the very order that brings war, exploitation and crisis. A struggle that remains within national borders cannot be successful either. After all, NATO is an international alliance of states, capitalism is an international system and, especially in the age of imperialism, is determined by international developments that cannot be separated from one another.

Struggles that take place only within a national framework must therefore, at best, remain a fight against windmills and, at worst, result in campist solidarity with imperialism that is hostile to one's own imperialism - freely following the motto: 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend.'

At the same time, a focus on 'foreign' imperialism leads to a downplaying of the same and ultimately to fatal tactical or strategic concessions, even if the declared main enemy - e.g. in the form of the USA - is defeated. imperialism leads to its downplaying and ultimately to fatal tactical or strategic concessions, even if the designated main enemy - e.g. in the form of the USA - is supposedly on one's own side. But this is also a fundamentally flawed policy: the real main enemy for every working class in imperialist countries is in their own country. It is this state that exploits them on a daily basis, represses them internally if they resist, and sends them to war for its own interests or those of its allies.

For these reasons, we believe that a new international is needed in the struggle against NATO. As revolutionary youths, we are particularly committed to building a new youth international that can put an end to the murderous imperialist war machine – whether NATO, China or Russia: stab the imperialist powers in the back!