

Ukrainian president berates China at Singapore security conference

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The unannounced appearance of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the annual Shangri-la Dialogue in Singapore last weekend is another sign of the global character of the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

Zelensky exploited the opportunity to lash out at China for failing to line up against Russia as he sought support at Asia's premier security forum for Ukraine's so-called peace conference to be held in Switzerland later this month.

Speaking at a press conference, the Ukrainian president accused Russia of using Chinese diplomats to pressure governments not to attend the Swiss gathering. Zelensky, who heads the US-backed puppet regime in Kyiv, declared: "It is unfortunate that such a big independent powerful country as China is an instrument in the hands of Putin."

The Ukrainian-sponsored "peace conference" is nothing more than a propaganda exercise for the Zelensky regime and its imperialist backers. The Ukrainian president explained that the forum will revolve around a discussion of points of his "peace plan" which amount to a demand for Russia's capitulation.

The meeting in Switzerland will take place as the US has dramatically escalated the conflict by giving the green light to Ukraine to use American long-range missiles to strike into Russian territory, greatly heightening the danger of nuclear war. That is the real character of the "peace" that will be discussed.

China stated last week that it would not send a delegation to the summit, insisting that a genuine peace conference should have "recognition by both Russia and Ukraine, equal participation by all parties, and fair discussion of all peace plans."

Zelensky also parroted Washington's claims that

China is selling "dual use" items to Russia enabling it to maintain its military capabilities. Certain elements that make up parts of Russia's weaponry, he said, "come from China."

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin mouthed the same accusation in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun, warning that there would be "consequences" for any Chinese support for Russia's military. Washington is planning another round of punitive sanctions on China over the export of "dual use" items to Russia.

What staggering hypocrisy! As the Biden administration supplies tens of billions worth of actual weaponry to Ukraine to attack Russian forces, it demands that China halt trade in so-called "dual use" items—an ill-defined category covering a vast array of goods.

In fact, US imperialism is seeking to bully China into assisting in the economic crippling of Russia. Washington had calculated that its far-reaching sanctions on Russia—including a freeze on its foreign currency reserves of \$350 billion and exclusion from the SWIFT system for facilitating international transactions—would bring Moscow to its knees.

US objections are not just to "dual use" items but that the growth of overall Chinese trade has provided an economic lifeline to Russia. Estimates cited in the US-based *Foreign Affairs* journal indicate bilateral trade grew by 36 percent to \$190 billion in 2022 and further expanded to \$240 billion last year. The bulk of China's imports from Russia were oil, gas and coal, while Chinese exports were dominated by industrial equipment, cars and consumer electronics.

Chinese Defence Minister Dong denied US allegations that Beijing was bolstering Russia's defence industries with dual-use exports. He pointed

out that China had not provided weapons to either side of the conflict and had put stricter controls on the export of dual-use items.

Speaking on Monday, China's foreign ministry spokesperson defended China's trade with Russia. "We also attach great importance to our relations with Ukraine... China and Ukraine have maintained communication and cooperation since the Ukrainian crisis escalated," Mao Ning said.

Even as it is waging war against Russia in Ukraine and backing Israel's genocide in Gaza, US imperialism is accelerating its military build-up throughout the Indo-Pacific against China, which Washington regards as the chief threat to its global dominance.

US Defense Secretary Austin boasted to the gathering about the "new era of security" in the Indo-Pacific as the US strengthens military alliances and partnerships in the region such as AUKUS—with Australia and the UK—and the "Quad"—with Japan, India and Australia. This "new convergence" outlined by Austin is accompanied by an expansion of joint war games aimed at rehearsing for conflict with China.

That the US build-up of "collective capacity" is aimed against China was evident in the comments by two close US allies to the Singapore summit, Australia and the Philippines. Both lashed out against China's activities in the South China and East China Seas.

In a deliberately provocative speech, Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles not only blamed China for recent confrontations with Australian naval forces, but also condemned its purported aggressive actions towards the Philippines and Taiwan.

"Actions by Chinese vessels in the West Philippine Sea [the Philippine term for the South China Sea], such as the use of water cannons and the ramming of Philippine vessels, are a serious escalation of tensions," he declared, adding that "China's behaviour towards Taiwan creates similar concerns."

The US and its allies, particularly the Philippines, have deliberately heightened tensions with China over longstanding territorial disputes in the South China Sea. In the case of Taiwan, the Biden administration has effectively overturned the "One China" policy by boosting relations and arms sales to Taipei. It also has put US military "trainers" on the island.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr also indirectly condemned China's actions declaring that he

would not allow the country to yield one square inch or even a millimetre of its territory and maritime zones. While claiming to want to resolve issues through "dialogue and diplomacy," the Marcos administration has greatly enhanced the US military presence in the country and involvement in joint drills.

Austin also joined the fray declaring: "Every country, large or small, has the right to enjoy its own maritime resources. The harassment the Philippines has faced is dangerous, pure and simple."

Chinese Defence Minister Dong responded on Sunday condemning the formation of "exclusive military alliances" and attempts to create "bloc confrontation." He continued: "Various small circles targeting other countries cannot make our region safer and can only cause more tension."

Dong accused Washington of "hegemonic behaviour," declaring that the "relevant countries should abandon their zero-sum mindset, arrogance and bias and treat regional countries with sincerity." Without mentioning the US, he accused the Philippines of being emboldened by outside powers to break bilateral agreements [with China] and make premeditated provocations.

The defence minister declared that "China has exercised great restraint," but warned that "there is a limit to our restraint." In particular, he condemned Manila's decision to allow the US to station mid-range missiles in the region for the first time since the Cold War.

The exchanges between Chinese officials and those from the US and its allies have been escalating over the past decade as Washington has ramped up its confrontation with Beijing. The presence of Zelensky, however, condemning China and touting for support for the war against Russia is a sharp warning the brutal war that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives already is rapidly developing into a wider conflict not just in Europe, but in Asia and throughout the world.



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