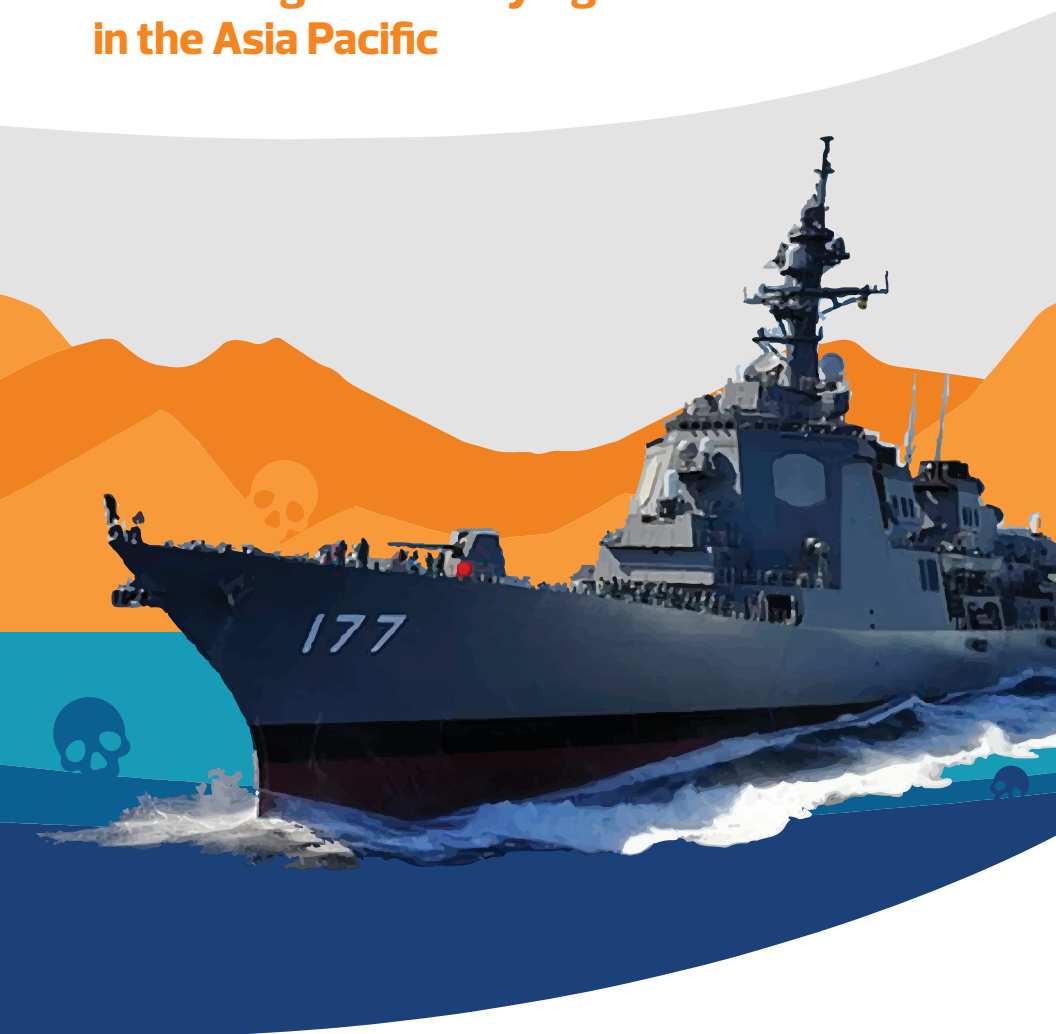


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THE POWER PLAY

Unraveling US Military Agreements
in the Asia Pacific



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The Power Play:

Unraveling US Military Agreements in the Asia Pacific



Introduction

Military agreements between state governments are significant tools for ensuring broad-ranging strategic objectives. While most agreements are written with theoretical neutrality and evenness of responsibilities and provisions, in practice these are subject to the same political and socioeconomic inequalities existing in all other aspects of international relations. Therefore, military agreements are just as much tools of economic and political submission as they are of global military dominance by imperialist and other aggressive states.

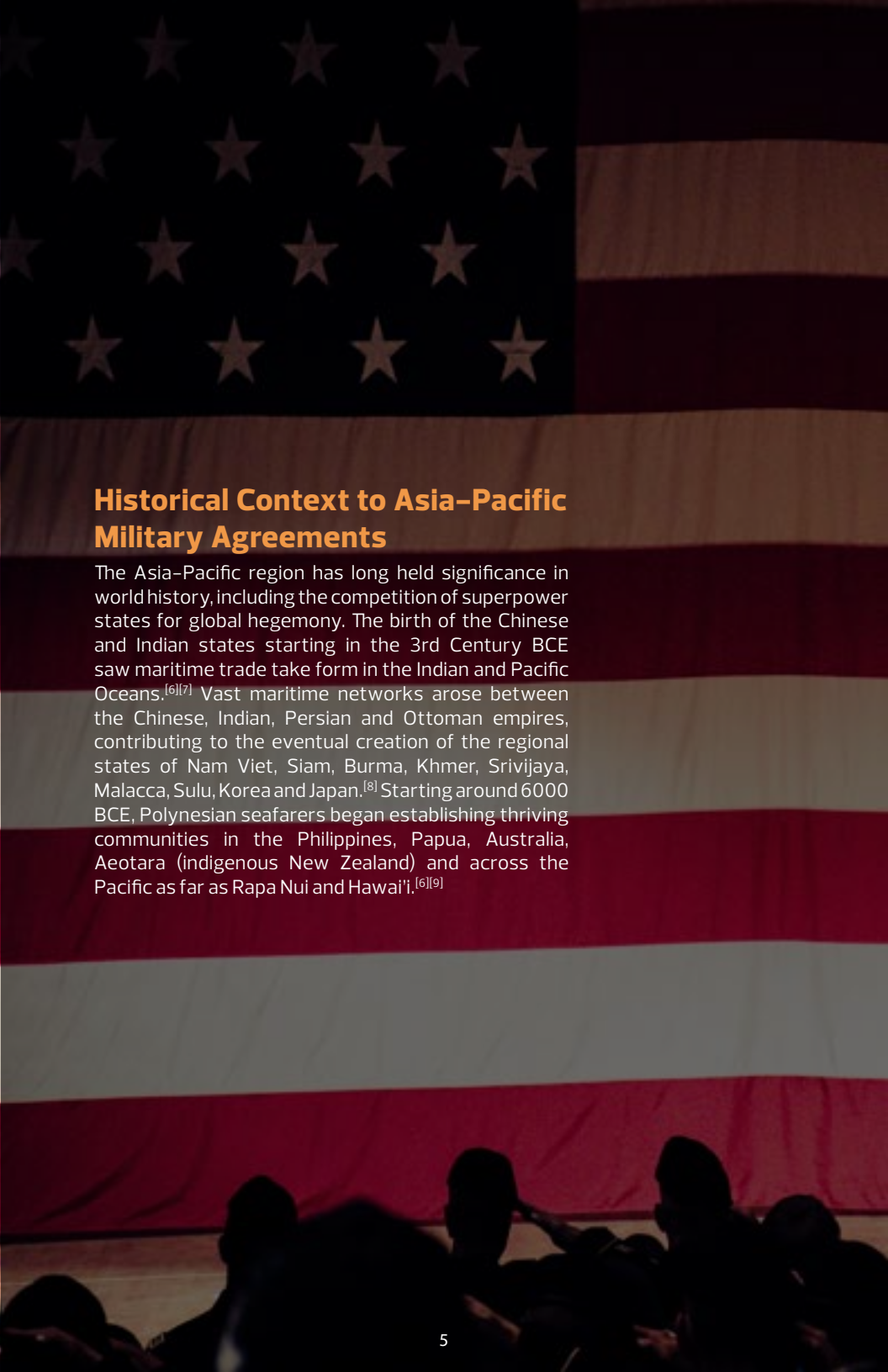


The United States (US) remains the largest imperialist power in the world today, and it holds position not through its military might alone, but through the combined supremacy of its allied and subaltern states.^[1] It is only able to direct the military deployment of other states by appropriating their command structures to its own military strategy. Military agreements signed between the US and other states create the legal framework for this appropriation, even though in practice their implementation often extends far beyond the scope of international law.

These agreements come in the form of bilateral treaties between two countries or multilateral treaties of many, most notable examples of the latter being the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Quadrilateral Dialogue (Quad), and Australia-United Kingdom-United States agreement (AUKUS). Regardless of geographical scope, the treaties signed by the US give it easy access to territory through the allowance of overseas military bases, public displays of strength through joint military exercises, reliable markets for weapons sales and the assurance of signed countries' militaries following the direction of US military command in the often-misused name of "mutual defense." All these occurrences have disastrously violent effects on the livelihoods of the people of the world.

While these agreements are present throughout the world wherever the US has a geopolitical hold on power, the Asia-Pacific (sometimes also called the Indo-Pacific) region is home to some of the most significant and consolidated US-led agreements in the world today after the mostly Europe-centric NATO. With 42% of global foreign investments, 41% of global exports and 36.8% of global imports transported along 60% of the world's maritime shipping routes and as the home of origin of 40% of the world's migrants, the Asia-Pacific is central for any state aspiring to hold the mantle of global superpower.^{[2][3][4][5]} The region is home to at least five nuclear-armed states, some with varying political interests (China, North Korea, India, Pakistan, and Russia's Eastern border), and the majority of the remaining states hold military agreements with these or other nuclear-armed states, principally the US.

It is therefore imperative, for residents of the Asia-Pacific and all those who stand in solidarity and mutual benefit in the future demilitarization of the region, to grasp the historical consequences and current relevance of and potential prospects for resistance to military agreements in the Asia-Pacific region. This primer intends to contribute to that objective.

The background of the page is a dark, semi-transparent image of the United States flag. The stars and stripes are visible but muted. In the foreground, at the bottom, there are dark silhouettes of several people, possibly in a crowd or at a public event, looking towards the top of the page.

Historical Context to Asia-Pacific Military Agreements

The Asia-Pacific region has long held significance in world history, including the competition of superpower states for global hegemony. The birth of the Chinese and Indian states starting in the 3rd Century BCE saw maritime trade take form in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.^{[6][7]} Vast maritime networks arose between the Chinese, Indian, Persian and Ottoman empires, contributing to the eventual creation of the regional states of Nam Viet, Siam, Burma, Khmer, Srivijaya, Malacca, Sulu, Korea and Japan.^[8] Starting around 6000 BCE, Polynesian seafarers began establishing thriving communities in the Philippines, Papua, Australia, Aotara (indigenous New Zealand) and across the Pacific as far as Rapa Nui and Hawai'i.^{[6][9]}

The massive wealth accumulated by the empires, sultanates and rajanates of the region attracted the attention of the European powers that had been withering economically since the end of the Roman Empire. Starting in the 16th Century, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France and England set up networks of trading posts to begin amassing spices and other commodities to sell back in Europe.^[10] In addition to these so-called "Trade Post Empires," Spain fully colonized the Philippines while the Dutch eventually colonized Indonesia, and England began conquering territory in India.^{[11][12][13][14]}

The 19th Century saw the European Industrial Revolution born from the extracted wealth of the near-complete colonization of the Asia-Pacific.^[15] This included the Spanish Philippines, Dutch Indonesia, French Indochina and Pacific Islands, British India, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, and later German Papua and Pacific Islands and the US Philippines, Hawai'i and Pacific Islands.^[16] Events also saw the political "independence" of the Anglo-descended settlers of Australia and New Zealand, the rise of Japan as an independent industrial power and the partition of China between nine of the imperialist powers of the time.^{[17][18][19]}

Because imperialist plunder can only lead to war as the competition for conquered land, labor and markets intensifies, tensions and conflict began to flare up in the early 20th Century. Japanese imperialism led to a war of conquest against China and then against Russia to defend its conquered lands in China and Korea.^[18] In 1887, Germany and the US deployed battleships against each other over territorial disputes of the Samoan Islands. After Germany's defeat in World War I, Japan was "awarded" all of Germany's colonies in the Pacific.^{[20][21]} This newly established Japanese empire

would expand rapidly and aggressively through militarism and state fascism as the leading Axis Power in the Asia-Pacific.^[22] As Japan colonized nearly all of Southeast Asia, armed national liberation movements rose as the front line of anti-fascist unity and defense in China, Korea, Indochina (primarily Vietnam), Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Burma. After the defeat of fascist Germany, Italy and their puppet states in Europe, the US sent its full military force into the Asia-Pacific waging inter-imperialist war against Japan.^{[23][24][25][26][27]} Despite the anti-fascist mass mobilization in every country, the US copied the Japanese in carpet bombing its way to dominance so as to reconquer all its lost colonies and reestablish the European presence, ending with the nightmarish nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.^[28]

The end of World War II advanced the US as the leading imperialist power of the world and began the so-called "Cold War" between the US-led powers and the Soviet Union-led socialist states.^[29] With the successful people's revolution in China, the Asia-Pacific became a key battlefield in this conflict. The US occupied Japan until departing in 1952 after ensuring that its military would only be "defensive." To keep its influence on the country, the US wrote and imposed the US-Japan Security Treaty, the first of many US military agreements that stipulated either country would "defend" the other if attacked. The US-Japan treaty also allowed the US unilateral access to Japanese soil for its military bases.^[30]

The fact that Japan's economy was in tatters and its military was disarmed pivoted the treaty in the US' favor; this same model was used in the 1951 US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty to ensure the Philippines' economic

and political system would remain tied to US foreign policy and geopolitical interests after the US granted the country pseudo-independence.^[31] The US would sign a joint military agreement with the much more politically independent Australia and New Zealand in the same year—named the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty—to strengthen its strategic hold in the region.^[32] The Korean War brought devastation to the region again and ended with the US occupation of the South, another convenient adversary in the North and a military tension that lasts still today. The latter became justification for the 1953 US–South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty in the same US-dominated vein as the others.^[33] Then 1955 saw the signing of the Sino–American Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan. This set of military agreements allowed the US to establish an iron web of militarization in the Asia-Pacific through a vast network of overseas military bases and intelligence outposts that still exists today.^{[34][35]}

Successful national liberation struggles erupted in the colonies of French Indochina and British Malaysia, with organized revolutionary movements arising in Indonesia, the Philippines, Burma, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.^{[36][37][38][39][40][41]} Basing its troops and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives in nearby countries that held military agreements, the US trained puppet armies in these nations to crush dissent and impose state fascism.^[42] Where the resistance persisted, the US itself deployed its own counterinsurgency forces via its overseas bases granted by military agreements.^[43] Never once was any of these countries in need of “mutual defense” from a foreign threat.

With NATO leading the US-led war in

Europe, the US partnered with the UK and France (former Pacific colonial powers), Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines to bring Thailand and Pakistan into a NATO-copycat Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1955.^{[44][45]} But this disbanded in 1977 due to the disgrace of the US and its aggressive allies who were defeated by the successful national liberation struggles of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Moving forward, bilateral Mutual Defense Treaties with individual countries would remain the main tool for US-led war in the region until the new millennium.^[46]

China’s “opening up” of its economy and gradual dismantling of socialist policies became a major opportunity for investment from the US and other imperialist powers.^[47] The US feigned friendship by ending the previous military agreement with Taiwan, but silently signed a new Taiwan Relations Act in 1979 with enough ambiguity to declare “mutual defense” to justify military action against China in the future should it desire.^[48]

With the end of the Cold War, the world saw economic crisis and mass unrest as the US began asserting its ultimate triumph through direct military invasions and a major expansion of its overseas bases. NATO also began rapid expansion eastward towards Russia’s borders.^[49] The new millennium inaugurated the US War on Terror doctrine of endless war and counterinsurgency, particularly in Muslim-majority regions.^[50] Yet, this triumphalism would end with the economic and military rise of China as a competitor once again. The signing of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization between China, Russia and a host of other states in 2002 became an early sign of an adversary military

alliance, leading to the US' declared "Pivot to Asia" strategy in 2012.^{[51][52][53]} This became the main context for the current state of US-led war in the Asia-Pacific as the US Pacific Command was renamed the Indo-Pacific Command in 2018 to expand its operations.^[54]

With the remilitarization of Japan into an offensive military state since 2007 and the war in Ukraine being used to justify more US naval power and weapons sales to the region, the US-led military agreements signed in the past decades provide the access US imperialism needs to flex its deteriorating muscles towards its lead competitor, China, and the national liberation movements rising against its hold on the Asia-Pacific.^[55] New multilateral alliances like the Quad and AUKUS arise as desperate attempts

for the US to maintain hold of its strategic gains. A new arms race for the semiconductor markets of Taiwan fuels escalating tensions today as the US hints at a new military agreement with the member states of the Pacific Islands Forum.^[56] The 2022 US-led biannual Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) military exercise mobilized a record 27 countries in Hawai'i to participate and observe; with the annual Cobra Gold mobilized 30 in Thailand.^{[57][58]}

It is this history of rising and falling superpower states paving the way for the rise and impending fall from dominance of US-led war in the wake of unceasing peoples' resistance that underlie the present state of military agreements in Asia-Pacific today.

Multilateral Military Alliances



QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE (QUAD)

After the 2004 Tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the United States, Japan, Australia, and India convened to form the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) to offer disaster response and humanitarian aid.^[59] For its first few years, Quad was an unofficial body. In 2007, the collaboration was formalized but was inactive for fear of provoking China.^[60]

Since China has been steadily growing its economic and military might, the Quad was revived in 2017 with a new orientation. Their original mandate to provide disaster assistance has been revised to counteract China's expansion instead – coinciding with the US' Pivot to Asia strategy.^[54] The Quad held their first official summit in 2021.^[61]

The Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi, believes that Quad's new lease on life lays the foundation for "a so-called Indo-Pacific NATO." Wang also states that "what [Quad] pursues is to trumpet the Cold War mentality and to stir up confrontation among different groups and blocs and to stoke geopolitical competition." Although there are no mutual-defense arrangements among Quad member countries, China's concerns draw their merit from the US' long history of foreign military intervention and provocative public rhetoric directed specifically at the nation.^[62]

Looking into Quad's roster, there is uneven commitment amongst its members. Australia and Japan are known to have sturdy ties with the US, but India maintains its ties with Russia and China.

India was once considered the "weakest link" among Quad members, but recent developments suggest that the US is courting the South Asian country.^[63] In the context of multipolar competition, the United States is consolidating their allies to secure their foothold in the region. India's economy, strategic location (in relation to China), and nuclear capabilities make it a desirable partner for any imperialist.^{[64][65]}

Despite US officials' claims that Quad is not open to new members, they have been holding "Quad plus" meetings which include representatives from South Korea, New Zealand, and Vietnam – all of which are located in the Asia-Pacific.^{[66][67]}

AUSTRALIA-UNITED KINGDOM- UNITED STATES (AUKUS)

The Quad failing to bring India immediately into the US' sphere of influence hobbles the US' Pivot to Asia strategy. Such setbacks in the face of intensifying imperialist competition compels the US to hammer out a new military program to secure the region.

In September 2021, then- Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced a trilateral strategic defense alliance – AUKUS – between Australia, UK and the US. This security pact arms Australia with at least eight (8) state- of- the- art nuclear-powered submarines manufactured in the United States. Aside from the sharing of nuclear submarine technology, the tripartite military agreement includes the bolstering of Australia's cyberwarfare and missile systems.^[68] The stream of American weapons and military technology into the Pacific has swelled, and AUKUS has been a pipeline for this.

The military pact further aggravates tensions with China. China is aware that this new military alliance between and among its rivals is aimed at limiting their influence and economic control and is directed towards neutralizing their military rise in the region. The Global Times, a Chinese Communist Party-owned international media outfit, threatened that “if Australia dares to provoke China more blatantly because of that, or even find fault militarily, China will certainly punish it.”^[69]

Australia has long been a strategic launchpad of the United States through its several military bases such as Pine Gap and the Naval Communication Station Harold E. Holt. But the advent of the AUKUS agreement has facilitated the transition of Australia into a full-blown active major actor in the geopolitical disputes of the region.^{[70][71]} There has been an observed increase in permanent US military presence in Northern Australia as well as regular joint military exercises in Australia (Talisman Saber and Pitch Black).^{[72][73]}

FIVE EYES (FVEY)

Initially assembled in 1946, the Five Eyes alliance was formed between five anglophone countries and their security agencies: the US (National Security Agency), the UK (Government Communications Headquarters), Australia (Australian Signals Directorate), Canada (Communications Security Establishment Canada) and New Zealand (Government Communications Security Bureau) comprising of a series of bilateral agreements on surveillance and intelligence-sharing.^[74]

During the Cold War, FVEY monitored the movements of the Soviet Union. In 1971, through the ECHELON project, the alliance was formalized and reoriented to include industrial espionage on top of their military surveillance. Shrouded in secrecy, FVEY allows for arbitrary or unlawful intrusions on the right to privacy which circumvent domestic legal restrictions on state surveillance. There is no domestic legislation governing intelligence-sharing, meaning that many of these arrangements lack legal basis and, therefore, democratic legitimacy.^{[75][76]}

FVEY members have been critical of China over several issues – Uyghur persecution, maritime encroachment, political repression in Hong Kong, and China's assertions for neutrality between themselves and the US on the issue of Taiwan.^{[77][78]} On the other hand, New Zealand is reluctant to echo its allies' concerns due to their significant trade relations with China.^[79]

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO)

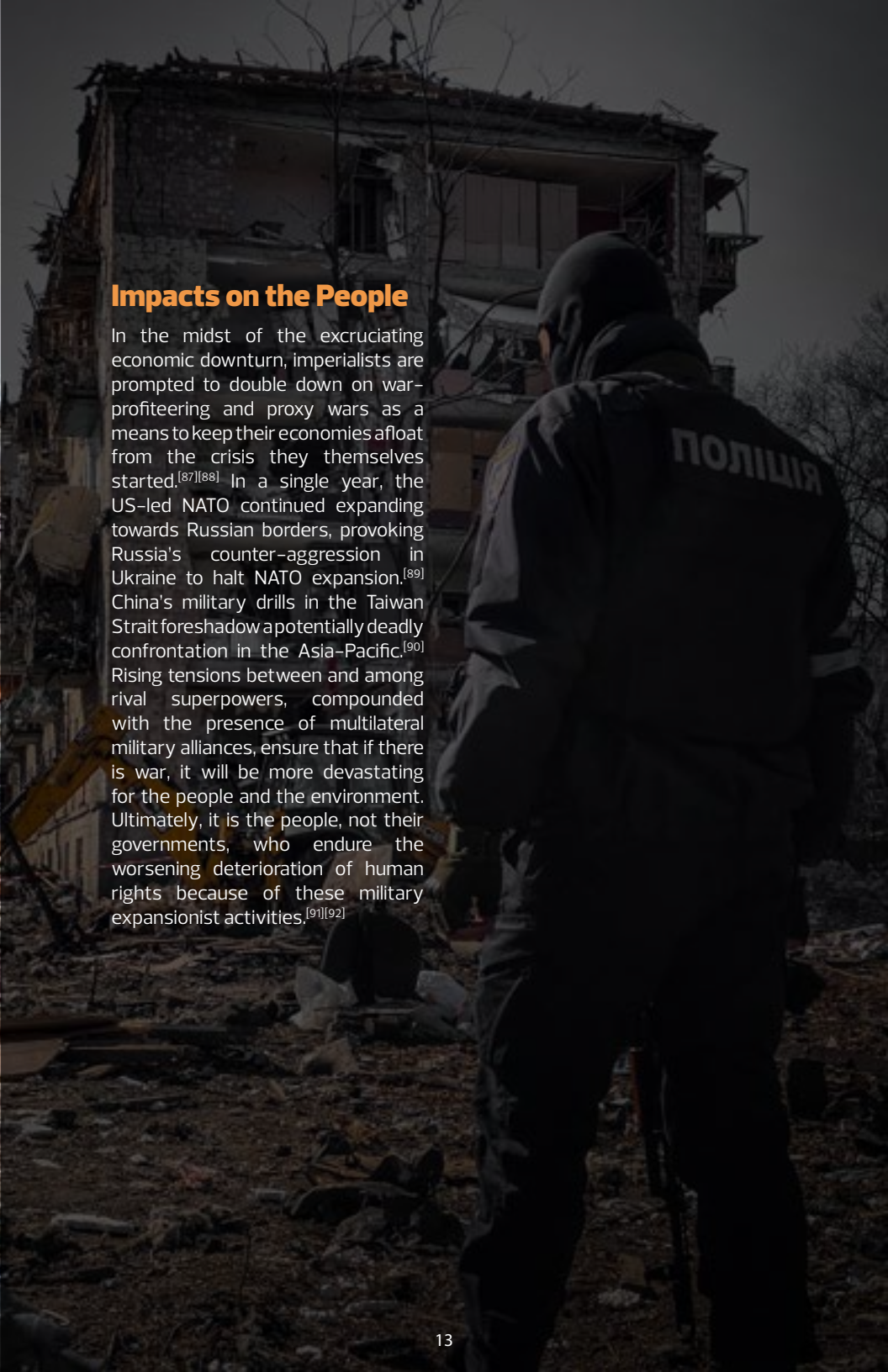
China has not been idle in the face of the West's deepening military presence and economic intervention in Asia. Since 1996 China has been a member of the Shanghai Five, which turned into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001.^[80] The SCO is an intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai on 15 June 2001. It currently comprises eight Member States (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), four Observer States interested in acceding to full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and

six “Dialogue Partners” (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey).^[81] In 2021, the decision was made to start the accession process of Egypt, Qatar, as well as Saudi Arabia as dialogue partners.^[82] In the latest SCO summit in 2022, Iran has been accepted as a full member.^[83]

Since its establishment in 2001, the SCO has ramped up its recruitment as well as its military capacity.^[84] Joint military and security cooperation, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism drills among members have ramped up especially in the last few years.^[85] If we are to compare the SCO with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), we will see that the military potential of SCO members heavily outweighs ASEAN members. The SCO members' combined military troops amount to over 8,293,000 people, while ASEAN is at 2,432,200. The sum

of SCO members' defense spending reaches US\$411 billion in 2019. In the same year, ASEAN members' total defense expenditures were only at US\$30.68 billion. The total population as well as the combined GDP of SCO members is exponentially greater than ASEAN's. Furthermore, four SCO member countries (China, Russia, India, and Pakistan) possess nuclear warfare capabilities, as opposed to ASEAN's zero.^[86]

As tensions rise in the Asia-Pacific, military pacts from competing multipolar factions shift the regional security landscape from lukewarm to scalding. The US' drive to dominate the region for decades has borne the fruit of this superpower military buildup, and the SCO must be seen as the natural result of unchecked US military might following the wave of national liberation wars up to the 1970s.



Impacts on the People

In the midst of the excruciating economic downturn, imperialists are prompted to double down on war-profiteering and proxy wars as a means to keep their economies afloat from the crisis they themselves started.^{[87][88]} In a single year, the US-led NATO continued expanding towards Russian borders, provoking Russia's counter-aggression in Ukraine to halt NATO expansion.^[89] China's military drills in the Taiwan Strait foreshadow a potentially deadly confrontation in the Asia-Pacific.^[90] Rising tensions between and among rival superpowers, compounded with the presence of multilateral military alliances, ensure that if there is war, it will be more devastating for the people and the environment. Ultimately, it is the people, not their governments, who endure the worsening deterioration of human rights because of these military expansionist activities.^{[91][92]}

The surging prices of oil and other basic commodities are just one manifestation of the impacts of militarism on the people.^[93] There are many other direct and indirect consequences of intensifying militarism – both being proportionately destructive.

In the Asia-Pacific in particular, most countries have had to compromise key aspects of their political sovereignty in exchange for US military support or presence to be codified in a military agreement. This may seem benign until it's seen how many domestic industries are now controlled by US foreign investment with nearly US\$900 billion in 2021 alone.^[94]

This foreign ownership over national industries has been the impetus for almost all of these countries to enact austerity policies to replenish state funds.^[95] Yet these funds have gone towards exponentially rising military budgets in order to match the expectations of US Indo-Pacific Command's strategy.^[96] This spending is often used on these countries' own people to assert the ruling powers of the state against opposition or mass dissent.^[97]

In short, US military agreements are political tools to increase foreign control in favor of US and allied economic interests, while rising military budgets informed by military agreements increasingly siphon resources from social services such as health, education and public infrastructure.^[98]

US forces stationed in countries under stipulations of military agreements introduce an epidemic of violence against women, with countless US soldiers committing rape while off duty in communities surrounding bases. In Okinawa alone, 69 US troops were convicted between 2015 and 2020 of

sexual crimes against minors, with the youngest victim being nine months old.^[99] Despite making up hardly 1% of the consistent population of South Korea, US military personnel make up 33% of all sexual assault cases in the country.^[100] In the Philippines, US personnel have been accused of driving through urban poor barrios and kidnapping women off the street in unmarked vans.^[101] These, of course, only speak to the reported cases, and they exist in the context of both legal and underground red-light districts built around military bases to take advantage of the violent, patriarchal and racist mentality of visiting US forces that prey on landless and unemployed women of all ages deprived of livelihood by the worsening conditions of their societies.^{[102][103]}

The region is especially affected by another byproduct of global militarism – ecological crisis. Base construction and joint military exercises devastate coastal biomes, eroding beachheads and shallow reefs that provide livelihood for fishing communities.^[104] Meanwhile, chemical runoff from military operations has led to upticks in cancer and other diseases in coastal Asia-Pacific communities.^[105] Sea levels rise from global glacial melt – a rising trend from global warming – is already disappearing low-lying and small island nations faster than any other region of the world, while US military activity continues to be reported as the world's largest contribution to pollution and one of the highest emitters of greenhouse gases.^{[106][107]} This is backdropped by the legacy of US military control of the Pacific. Through its various military agreements used for unchecked nuclear tests in the region, at least 313 nuclears were undertaken by the US, UK and France. This left behind irradiated waters and soil around mostly small island nations that will remain hazardous for centuries.^[108]



Peoples' Resistance and Call to Action

With ever-rising attacks, loss of self-determination and environmental destruction in the Asia-Pacific region, the people must unite all efforts to end imperialism and all its vestiges. The just and lasting peace that we need will not be possible while imperialism, the driving logic of US military agreements, exists. Flashpoints of conflict, the military-industrial complex, proxy wars, fascism, military aid, arms deals, military bases, surveillance and intelligence, and other manifestations of imperialism, make our task all the more urgent.

Imperialism is a violent phenomenon that is hinged on economic expansionism. Foreign intervention goes hand-in-hand with neoliberal policies which compromise the sovereignty and national patrimony of local hosts.^[109] Hence, our demands against imperialism must also include our departure from extractive and onerous economic programs. Not only must foreign military troops, assets, bases, and facilities be withdrawn, but also the one-sided economic agreements which the former protects.

Meanwhile, local governments which capitulated and conspired with these imperialists must also be held responsible for endangering their constituents and the democracy of their country. The self-sabotage of their national economy to accommodate transnational companies while deploying armed forces to protect the corporate agenda has led to death and losses – any critical response from the people is met with repression and fascism.^[110]

We have only to look at the history of peoples' resistance in the countries highlighted in this primer to take lessons. In Japan, nearly a decade of anti-base protests from the masses culminated in 1960 when anti-base lawmakers held a sit-in in the legislature until they were arrested by 500 policemen on orders of the prime minister. This inspired a nationwide convergence and mass strike led by the Peoples' Council that shut down Tokyo, leading to the cancellation of US President Eisenhower's planned visit to celebrate the signing of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the resignation of Prime Minister Kishi.^[111] To this day, Japan faces daily anti-base protests of anywhere between three and thousands, especially on Okinawa where a vast amount of US bases exist in Japan, using methods as traditional as street picketing

and as broad-based as popularizing rare sea animals living only off the coasts of Japan that face extinction due to reef destruction from base expansion.^[112]

In the Philippines, the anti-base movement led decades of systematic campaigns against US military presence, with actions helmed by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (New Patriotic Alliance) and the Ban The Bases network winning enough support from Congress to vote out the US bases in 1992. With the passing of the 2004 Visiting Forces Agreement and 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement bringing US personnel de facto back to the Philippines, the anti-base movement has kept up, tying the movement against US bases to the broader movement for national democracy.^[113]

South Korea has hosted its own consistent anti-base protests since the signing of the US Mutual Defense Treaty, with thousands-strong candlelight vigils held in Seoul to militant actions where protesters have chained themselves to the gates of US bases.^[114] Today, anti-base protests are also linked to calls condemning the US-inspired National Security Act, widely used to terror-tag protesters.^[115] In Taiwan, the so-called "May 24 Incident" of 1957 in which over 6,000 protesters stormed the US embassy after a US court martial dropped all charges against a US sergeant who murdered a Taiwanese soldier kicked off Taiwan's own anti-base movement that exists to this day.^[116]

Peace activists in Australia and New Zealand have also consistently protested US bases since their inception, calling for an end to ANZUS. Indigenous nations have tied the anti-base movement to their own movements for national and social liberation.^[117] The anti-nuclear

movements have greatly contributed, winning New Zealand's 1986 Nuclear Free Zone status and adding energy to the movement against the nuclear submarines promised under AUKUS.^[118] The largest US drone base outside the country, Pine Gap, has been especially protested by the Australian peace movement.^[119]

Grassroots victories in each of these countries have been augmented by the strong participation and leadership of women and national minorities every step of the way. Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Malaysian and Indonesian survivors of the Japanese "comfort women" sex slavery during WW2 have used their experiences as examples of the horrors of foreign military occupation to inspire a multigenerational mass movement.^[120] Survivors of sex trafficking near US bases and women immiserated by the foreign investment-driven economic strangleholds following alongside military agreements have consistently united their interests to lead the movements against overseas bases and unequal military agreements in their countries.^[121] This leadership has been significant alongside that of national minorities and indigenous peoples in

Taiwan (Gaoshan), Korea (Jeju), Japan (Ryukyu, Ainu), the Philippines (Cordillera, Lumad, Moro), Indonesia (Pribumi, Papua), Malaysia (Orang Asli), Australia (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander), New Zealand (Maori) and other the Polynesian peoples of the Pacific Islands who have combined the fight against foreign military incursion with the fight to reclaim and maintain the self-determination of their ancestral lands. This history clearly shows that the people of the Asia-Pacific firmly reject US military agreements with their governments. The additional history of armed national liberation movements in the region exemplifies the decisiveness of the people to live free of them.

Resisting US-led war in the Asia-Pacific entails that we contribute to people's campaigns against both hegemons and local collaborators, whether we live in the region or are acting in solidarity from wherever we find ourselves. We must expose and oppose economic expansionism and the congruent military programs beside it. A task this daunting requires us to continue educating, organizing, and mobilizing one another against the imperialist war machine, and US-led war.

MILITARY AGREEMENTS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC



1949

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

European and North American countries

Not officially inclusive of Asia-Pacific countries, yet its actions greatly affect the status of the region and the world. See the Resist US-Led War and Asia Pacific Research Network primer "NATO: Imperialist War Machine" to learn more.^[122]



1951

MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY

US and Philippines

Was used to station hundreds of thousands of US troops in the country throughout the years, as well as stationing US intelligence officers for shadow ops in the Asia-Pacific.^[123] Mass opposition pushed the PH Senate to close all US bases in 1992.^[124]

The 2004 Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) kept US troops in the countries using Philippine bases.^[125]

During the Ukraine crisis, US Vice President Kamala Harris stated in 2022 that any attack by the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) on Philippine military or public vessels would "invoke US mutual defense commitments."^[126]

The Philippines and US agree on opening four Philippine bases for US troop use for the first time since the 1992 Senate decision, against the decision's legislation.^[127]



1951

ANZUS

US, Australia, and New Zealand

Brought Australia and New Zealand into the Korean and Vietnam wars, while New Zealand assisted the British in the Malaysian national liberation war.^[128]

New Zealand was suspended in 1986 when it declared itself a "nuclear free zone." Australia then maintained separate bilateral relations with New Zealand and the US until New Zealand returned in 2007.^[129]

Australia and New Zealand sent troops in US-led wars against East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq under stipulations of the treaty.^[130]



1952 revised in 1960

**US-JAPAN
SECURITY TREATY**
US and Japan

Imposed on Japan by the US after World War II to ensure US dominance and Japan as a loyal ally, along with access to overseas US military bases.^[131]

Was forced to be revised slightly multiple times due to mass opposition and anti-base actions from the Japanese public, including the 1960 re-writing that exists today with an additional stipulation requiring more consultation between the US and Japan on future military operations.^[132]

The agreement has allowed the US military to station more troops here than in any other country in the region, with one fifth of Okinawa occupied by US bases.^[133]

The treaty added cyber and outer space in 2019 to the domains it covers.^[134]



1953

MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY
US and Republic of Korea

The agreement was signed at the end of the Korean War but did not include a permanent ceasefire between the northern and southern countries of Korea.^[135]

The treaty has kept US troops present in the country ever since the start of the war. There have regularly been over 28,000 troops in the country since the treaty was signed.^[136]

This agreement includes the US-South Korea Status of Forces Agreement which stipulates relations between US troop presence and the government of South Korea. It has been used to justify expansion of US bases in the country and has come under fire from many protests over the years.^[137]



1955 revised in 1979

TAIWAN RELATIONS ACT
US and Taiwan

This change was mostly reflective of new relations between the US and PRC after the latter's rollback of socialist policies forbidding foreign capital investment, giving the US a new interest in renewed diplomacy.^[138]

Provides guidelines for US weapons sales to Taiwan, of which there have since been many.^[139]

Was used by the Biden administration in 2022 to threaten military invasion of Taiwan to weaken PRC's influence amid the Ukraine crisis in Eastern Europe and the drive for US control of Taiwan's semiconductor markets.^[140]



**PENDING
IMPLEMENTATION**

**US-PACIFIC ISLANDS
PARTNERSHIP ACT**
South Pacific Islands

Proposed as a diplomatic agreement between the US and the Pacific Islands Forum, or PIF (diplomatic association including Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Tokelau).^[141]

Included are intentions to bring the PIF into "connectivity" with other US-led alliance such as ASEAN, Quad and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.^[142]

The Act will open more US embassies in these countries as well as expand traditional "soft force" arms of US economic and ideological influence, such as USAID and the Peace Corps, which could set the groundwork for formal military agreements and establishment of US bases. The White House released its first ever "Pacific Partnership Strategy" addendum to its Indo-Pacific Strategy in September 2022.

Clearly stated in the Act is a labeling of China as an existential threat to the PIF nations, intended to mask the authors' true assertion - China is an existential threat to US dominance in the region. To counter this and the potentially more effective threat, united opposition from Pacific Islanders themselves, the US Pacific Partnership Strategy suggests using the traditional neo-colonial tool of "highlighting American culture, history, current events, and government" among the people.^[143]

US FUNDING OF REGIONAL MILITARIES PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO US MILITARIES

Civil society organizations and people's movements have condemned US military aid to regional militaries as a means to undermine public services and contribute to human rights abuses domestically and internationally against the people in multiple instances. By funneling military aid to other parts of the world – funding strategic launchpads, facilitating proxy wars, etc.

JAPAN

\$8 BILLION

No US aid, instead Japan provides the US with **over US\$8 billion** to fund US bases under the US–Japan Security Treaty.^[144]

The US has traditionally relied on deploying its own troops to Japan, but in 2023 the Japanese government committed to double defense spending, becoming the **third largest defense spender** after the US and China.^[145]

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

\$921.5 MILLION

While the US pays for most of its own troops in ROK, the Korean government pays for base upkeep, including **US\$921.5 million** in 2019, as stipulated in the US–ROK Mutual Defense Treaty.^[146]

In exchange for US overseas base presence, ROK receives regular updates to the **Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system** along the North–South Demilitarized Zone.^[147]

PHILIPPINES

\$5 BILLION

The Philippines is the largest recipient of US military aid in the Indo-Pacific, garnering **over US\$5 billion** since 1961.^[148]

The US regularly provides **combat helicopters, armored vehicles, machine guns and mortars** to the Philippines.^[149]

ARIES AND PARTNER COUNTRIES' MILITARY PRESENCE

high military spending in the region since these funds take away from and in recipient countries. Weapons from the US have also been used in other countries, the US is able to secure deeper footholds in other parts of the region through developing counter-insurgency programs, and exporting fascism.

AUSTRALIA

\$27 BILLION

Australia does not revive US military aid but relies on US weapons companies for its military purchases, with currently open orders ranging **over US\$27 billion**.^[150]

Australia purchases from US companies **combat helicopters, tanks, missiles, and even chemical weapons** deemed illegal by the United Nations such as white phosphorus. Of most controversy is the AUKUS deal for **US-provided nuclear submarine blueprints**.^{[151][152]}

NEW ZEALAND

\$3.01 BILLION

New Zealand's military spending follows similar trends with Australia, with the US as its prime weapons market. Its military budget in 2020 was **US\$3.01 billion**.^[153]

There are **similar purchases to Australia** under the ANZUS stipulations.^[154]

TAIWAN

\$30 BILLION

Taiwan has received **over US\$20 billion** in US military aid since 2017 with an **additional US\$10 billion** being proposed by US Congress after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's 2022 visit.^{[155][156]}

The US has provided **anti-ship and anti-air missiles and aircraft parts for fighter jets**.^[157]

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About the Co-Author Organizations

The Resist US–Led War Movement is a global grassroots network of anti-war and pro-peace organizations united on the calls to resist US-led war (including militarism, occupations, overseas bases, joint military exercises, proxy wars and other forms of covert intervention) and to build just peace through justice, social equity, economic and food sovereignty, self-determination and solidarity amongst peoples. Through providing an organizational network, campaign center and resource archive for our members, we seek to unite across countries and issues on the shared concern of global militarism led by the US, the number one warmaker in the world today. To get involved and learn more about our campaigns, Cut Ties With War Profiteers and The Anti-Militarism Agenda.

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