

Pentagon Chief Calls for Southeast Asian, Asia-Pacific Military Alliance Against China

By [Rick Rozoff](#)

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*The following are excerpts from a speech **Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's** delivered in Singapore. The host country is one of ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which he mentions more than once in the address. The others are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. For over a decade the U.S. has been trying to recruit ASEAN nations, individually and collectively, into an anti-Chinese (secondarily, an anti-Russian) bloc in the Asia-Pacific region. The first to lead that charge were Barack Obama, the self-styled first Pacific president of the U.S., and [his secretary of state Hillary Clinton](#).*

Austin's use of the phrase “a free and open Pacific, at peace with itself and with the world” is not fortuitous. It's a variation of the expression used by then-[President George H. W. Bush at Mainz, Germany in 1989 in a speech titled A Europe Whole and Free](#). In the interim the description has been expanded to Europe, whole, free and at peace. That phrase has been used to place all of Europe under NATO's thumb except for Belarus and European Russia. Austin's repetition of it suggests a similar design on the Asia-Pacific region.

In accusing China of “genocide and crimes against humanity,” he used the exact language used by NATO to justify waging its air wars against Yugoslavia and Libya.

[Secretary of Defense Remarks at the 40th International Institute for Strategic Studies Fullerton Lecture \(As Prepared\)](#)

There are transnational threats, like the pandemic and the existential threat of climate change... the specter of coercion from rising powers... the nuclear dangers from North Korea... the struggles against repression inside countries such as Myanmar...and leaders who ignore the rule of law and abuse the basic rights and dignity that all people deserve.

In the days ahead, I'll travel from Singapore to see my counterparts in Vietnam and the Philippines. I've come to Southeast Asia to deepen America's bonds with the allies and

partners on whom our common security depends....

[E]merging threats and cutting-edge technologies are changing the face and the pace of warfare. So we are operating under a new, 21st-century vision that I call “integrated deterrence.”

Now, integrated deterrence means using every military and non-military tool in our toolbox, in lock-step with our allies and partners. Integrated deterrence is about using existing capabilities, and building new ones, and deploying them all in new and networked ways...

We’re working with our hosts here in Singapore to enter a new phase in cyber-defense cooperation. We’re partnering with Japan to deploy new sensors in space to better detect potentially threatening behaviors....

Integrated deterrence also means working with partners to deter coercion and aggression across the spectrum of conflict... including in the so-called “grey zone” where the rights and livelihoods of the people of Southeast Asia are coming under stress....

Meanwhile, we’re improving interoperability across our security network. And that includes more complex exercises and training. In Japan, for example, we recently wrapped up an ambitious, large-scale exercise...in which U.S. and Japanese forces together conducted the first successful firing of a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System in Japan.

And we recently held the exercises known as Pacific Vanguard and Talisman Sabre off the coast of Australia, together with Japan, Australia, and the Republic of Korea. That underscored our ability to carry out integrated, high-end maritime operations with our allies.

Meanwhile, we are working with Taiwan to enhance its own capabilities and to increase its readiness to deter threats and coercion... upholding our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act....

At the same time, we’re moving to enhance our combined presence in the Indo-Pacific with other close partners and allies. Take Britain’s historic deployment of a carrier to the Pacific. The HMS Queen Elizabeth is sailing through this region as the flagship of a multi-nation carrier strike group that includes a U.S. destroyer and a U.S. Marine Corps F-35 squadron.

Our strategic partnerships can carry us all closer to the historic common project of **a free and open Pacific, at peace with itself and with the world....**

[We] are working through old alliances, and through new partnerships, and through regional and multilateral channels—from ASEAN to the Quad to the U.N. Security Council.

Beijing’s claim to the vast majority of the South China Sea has no basis in international law. That assertion treads on the sovereignty of states in the region....And we remain committed to the treaty obligations that we have to Japan in the Senkaku Islands and to the Philippines in the South China Sea.

Unfortunately, Beijing’s unwillingness to resolve disputes peacefully and respect the rule of law isn’t just occurring on the water. We have also seen **aggression against India... destabilizing military activity and other forms of coercion against the people of**

Taiwan...and genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

I know how pleased President Biden was to host the first Quad Leaders' Summit in March. And structures like the Quad make the region's security architecture even more durable.

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Rick Rozoff, renowned author and geopolitical analyst, actively involved in opposing war, militarism and interventionism for over fifty years. He manages the [Anti-Bellum and For peace, against war website](#)

He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization.

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