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Australian and Japan sign far-reaching anti-China security pact

On Sunday, Australia and Japan unveiled a new security pact, featuring expanded military, intelligence and strategic cooperation. The high-level character of the agreement was underscored by the fact that Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida travelled to Perth to announce the deal with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese.



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (left) with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Perth, Australia, Saturday, Oct. 22, 2022. [AP Photo/Stefan Gosatti]

The agreement does not mention China, but there is no question that it is directed against Beijing, as has been noted in the Australian press. The deal is part of a web of military alliances and partnerships, deepened under the umbrella of the Biden administration and aimed at advancing the aggressive American confrontation with China that threatens war in the Indo-Pacific.

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Significantly, the security pact was signed little over a week after the Biden administration released a new National Security Strategy, which sets out a plan for global conflict aimed at ensuring the dominance of American imperialism.

In the introduction to that document, Biden stated: “We are now in the early years of a decisive decade for America and the world. The terms of geopolitical competition between the major powers will be set.”

Even as the US is devoting massive resources to waging a proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, the National Security Strategy emphasised that its primary target is China. “We will effectively compete with the People’s Republic of China, which is the only competitor with both the intent and, increasingly, the capability to reshape the international order,” it declared.

The US preparations for war with China were bluntly spelt out by US Naval Operations Chief Admiral Michael Gilday at an event in Washington last Wednesday. He declared that the US and China could fight a war over control of Taiwan this year.

The US had to accelerate a military build-up, the admiral declared, so that it would have the weaponry required to “fight and win.” He did not want to “field ships out there in a fight that aren’t lethal, capable and ready to win... It’s readiness over capacity; the ships that we put out there have to be ready to fight.”

Both Japan and Australia are central to this war strategy. Japan, which invaded and occupied China in the 1930s and 1940s, has been encouraged to remilitarise by the US and its allies for a war that would eclipse the catastrophic consequences of World War II in the Pacific.

For its part, Australia plays a major political role, as an attack dog for US imperialism throughout the region. It has also been earmarked to play the role of a “southern anchor” in the event of a war with China, enforcing naval blockades aimed at choking Chinese supplies and serving as a launching pad for missiles and aircraft directed against Chinese forces.

Together with the US and India, Australia and Japan are also members of the Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue, a quasi-alliance of the four largest militaries in the region directed against China.

The Japan-Australia security pact is couched in bland diplomatic jargon that is common to such documents, but its meaning is nevertheless clear.

“We recognise that our partnership must continue to evolve to meet growing risks to our shared values and mutual strategic interests,” the statement asserts. “We affirm our

unwavering commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific,” it declares, repeating a key catch-cry of aggressive US intervention in the region.

Australia and Japan declare their commitment to a “rules-based order” in the region, code for the existing imperialist order in the Indo-Pacific presided over by the US. They will work towards “a favourable strategic balance that deters aggression and behaviour that undermines international rules and norms.”

The agreement states they will uphold “an open, stable, and secure maritime domain underpinned by adherence to international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS], in which States can exercise freedom of navigation and overflight and are not subject to coercive or destabilising actions.”

Under cover of hypocritical references to “international law,” this is a declaration that the US allies will continue provocative flights and naval interventions in the western Pacific close to the Chinese mainland.

For years, the US has conducted “freedom of navigation” exercises in or near waters claimed by China in the South China Sea. Over recent months, other US allies including Australia and Canada have conducted similar operations in the South and East China Seas, including military flights dangerously close to Chinese warships and fighter jets.

The agreement pledges to assist in developing “countries that are resilient to aggression, coercion, disinformation, malicious cyber activity and other forms of interference.” Australia has been at the forefront of a bogus campaign against Chinese “foreign interference,” domestically and elsewhere in the region. This has the character of a McCarthyite witch hunt justifying attacks on democratic rights at home, legitimising military aggression against China and demonising Beijing’s trade and diplomatic ties with Indo-Pacific countries.

The document also commits to deepening collaboration on cybersecurity, trade and in other economic areas.

While the details are vague, the pact outlined plans for expanded military cooperation between Japan and Australia, including calls for enhanced “interoperability” of their defence forces. Already, Japan has participated in military exercises in Australia, including war games last August in the country’s north rehearsing an aerial conflict.

There will be “more sophisticated joint exercises and operations, multilateral exercises with partners, mutual use of facilities including maintenance, asset protection, and personnel links and exchanges. We will reinforce security and defence cooperation including in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, humanitarian assistance and

disaster relief, capacity building for regional partners, advanced defence science and technology, defence industry and high-end capabilities.”

Media commentators in Australia have noted that Japan and Australia both have key signals and satellite facilities. Expanded collaboration will deepen the web of US-led surveillance that has been in place in the region for decades. Some have speculated that Japan may directly join the high-level US-dominated Five Eyes intelligence network, of which Australia is a member.

The document also sketches out greater political collaboration, including regular leader-to-leader meetings and lower-level engagements.

It makes clear that all of this is being developed, within the framework of the US war drive in the region. “Our bilateral partnership also reinforces our respective alliances with the United States that serve as critical pillars for our security, as well as for peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific. Deepening trilateral cooperation with the United States is critical to enhancing our strategic alignment, policy coordination, interoperability and joint capability,” it states.

The Australian Labor government is at the forefront of the US confrontation with China, aggressively campaigning against Chinese influence and seeking to line up states throughout the Indo-Pacific behind the US imperialism. Significantly, Albanese, despite having only assumed office after the May 21 election, has already held four meetings with Kishida.

The Japanese and Australian populations have been placed on the frontline of these catastrophic plans. In both countries, defence spending is increasing rapidly, but militarist think tanks are demanding much more, as working people are forced to bear burdens through record inflation, stagnant wages and the dismantling of social programs.

A political struggle by workers in both countries to defend living conditions is inexorably bound up with the fight to build a unified anti-war of the international working class to put an end to the profit system that is the root cause of war.

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