

The WikiLeaks cables and the US-Australia alliance

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Leaked US diplomatic cables have detailed the extraordinary level of involvement of the American state in the day to day functioning of Australian politics, laying bare the real character of the diplomatic relationship between Washington and Canberra.

Through a web of secret informants and agents, who are active in every parliamentary party, the trade unions, the media, and the various state institutions, the US government and intelligence agencies function as active participants in political life. The primary conduit for these forces is the Australian Labor Party—the party that has postured, throughout the past century, as the representative of the working class, but which has played the most critical role in subordinating that class to the Australian capitalist state.

The WikiLeaks' material demonstrates that it would by no means be far-fetched to describe Australia as a client state of Washington. This is certainly not a recent development. But never before have the sordid, behind the scenes machinations of US "diplomacy" been so openly exposed before the eyes of ordinary people, demonstrating where power really lies in the country's so-called "democratic" system.

The most significant aspect of the WikiLeaks' material is that it leaves no doubt that the ousting of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd last June was a coup made in the USA.

American concerns with Rudd emerged as early as February 2008, within three months of the Labor government's election, and intensified during the next two years. They focussed on the prime minister's penchant for launching diplomatic initiatives—such as the proposed "Asia Pacific Community" in

mid-2008—without first getting the go-ahead from Washington. Rudd's various manoeuvres were not intended to run counter to Washington's interests, but they nevertheless jarred with the US administration's efforts to maintain American hegemony in East Asia and internationally against its rival, China.

Mounting regional tensions expressed profound shifts in the global geo-strategic balance of forces, driven by the intractable decline of US capitalism and the reckless drive by the American ruling elite to use its military might to maintain global dominance. As far as Washington was concerned, Canberra's role was to take its assigned place in the anti-Beijing diplomatic and military cordon. In return, Washington would continue to support Australian imperialism's own predatory operations in the South Pacific.

Throughout 2008 and 2009, Rudd was increasingly viewed by US operatives in Canberra as a somewhat erratic figure. He could not be trusted in relation to China and was insufficiently committed to the war in Afghanistan. In collaboration with their Australian informants, embassy officials began to canvass alternatives. In mid-2008, Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard was identified as Rudd's most likely successor. Labor Party and trade union figures privately assured American officials that her origins in the party's "left" were no blot on her right-wing, pro-US credentials. Gillard, clearly conscious of the opportunities opening up for her, responded by currying favour with the US embassy and with the Israeli government—one official wondered whether she had suddenly developed greater sympathy for Washington's views, or whether her actions merely reflected an "understanding of what she needs to do to become leader of the ALP".

This off-hand remark points to the political physiognomy of the Labor Party. The Labor apparatus has become nothing but a vehicle for the implementation of big business interests against the working class at home, and the transmission belt for Washington's global agenda.

The anti-democratic coup against an elected prime minister was carried out behind the back of the Australian people by right-wing factional leaders in the Labor Party and trade unions, all of whom enjoyed close relationships with American officials. Moreover, the leading apparatchik involved, Senator Mark Arbib, is now known to have been one of the embassy's secret "protected sources".

Washington has a long record of interference in Australian politics—most notably in 1975, when the CIA mounted a destabilisation campaign against the elected Labor government of Gough Whitlam, which culminated in the November 11 coup.

In the immediate aftermath of Rudd's axing, the *World Socialist Web Site* pointed to the key role of Washington in the sordid events of June 23-24. It was the only publication to do so.

A statement by the Socialist Equality Party, issued four days after Gillard's installation explained: "Thirty-five years ago, in the midst of the last major global crisis of the capitalist system, the Whitlam Labor government was sacked in a coup involving the highest levels of the state apparatus, as well as intelligence agencies including the American CIA. No doubt these same forces were either directly involved in, or at least had knowledge of, the ousting of Rudd."

The statement continued: "Australia is extremely sensitive to geo-political shifts. The Whitlam government was sacked within just seven months of the defeat of US imperialism in Saigon, in conditions of great uncertainty for the United States in South East Asia. Today, one of the central features of the geopolitical situation is the increasing tension between the US and China, under conditions where Australia is economically dependent on China but politically subordinated to the United States. Throughout the South Pacific and Southeast Asian region, the 'China factor' is now a major issue in political affairs." (See: "The Australian Labor Party coup: a

warning to the working class")

In less than six months, this analysis has been entirely vindicated. The coup itself was an expression of the fact that the explosive geo-strategic tensions identified in the SEP statement—together with deepening class antagonisms in Australia fuelled by unprecedented levels of social inequality—could no longer be managed within the old parliamentary framework. Moreover, it demonstrated that there exists no section of the official political establishment that retains any commitment to the democratic rights of the Australian population.

The WikiLeaks' material has revealed that Rudd urged US Secretary of State to consider the use of force against China, while in 2006, then Labor leader Kim Beazley promised American officials that Australia would fight alongside the US in a war against China. These extraordinary commitments were never made public.

In World War I, Labor leaders promised their British superiors that Australia would fight to "the last man and last shilling" in defence of the Empire. A century later, their counterparts have endangered the safety of the population by tying its fate to the increasingly reckless US war machine as it plunges towards a regional conflagration, involving rival nuclear-armed powers.

The Australian ruling elite has committed to a nuclear catastrophe. The pressing task confronting the working class is to develop its own independent political response. This requires a conscious break with the Labor Party, the trade unions, and their various adjunct organisations, including the Greens, and a fight for the development of a new mass revolutionary socialist party in unity with the American, Chinese, and international working class. That party is the Socialist Equality Party, the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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