

Warnings from Australian political establishment about Donald Trump

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This week, two leading figures within the Australian political establishment warned that a win by Republican nominee Donald Trump in the US elections could jeopardise the US-Australian alliance.

On Monday's "Q&A" program on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Bob Carr, who was foreign minister in the Gillard Labor government, said a Trump presidency would "really challenge" US security arrangements throughout the Asia-Pacific.

On Tuesday, former federal Labor leader Kim Beazley published an article on the website of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), a prominent government-funded think-tank. He called for "immediate, forceful and sustained" Australian responses to the prospect of a Trump administration. In other comments to the ABC, he warned that Trump would "cause mayhem" for the US-Australian alliance.

Both Carr and Beazley speak for sections of the Australian ruling elite and have longstanding connections in Washington, including within the US military and intelligence establishment.

Beazley served as Australia's ambassador to the US from 2010 until January this year. He was a senior minister in the Hawke Labor government, which participated in the US-led war on Iraq in 1991. As Labor leader, he supported Australian participation in the criminal US occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. In June, he was appointed to the Australian board of major US defence contractor Lockheed Martin.

Carr was premier of New South Wales, the most populous state. In 2013, diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks revealed that Carr was one of a number of senior Labor figures secretly operating as informants for the US embassy. The leaks revealed that he first gave confidential briefings to US officials in 1974. He became foreign minister in 2012 as Gillard's

government deepened Australia's alignment with the US "pivot to Asia," directed against China.

Beazley's and Carr's comments coincide with the campaign of Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, working in league with the US military and the intelligence agencies, to attack the fascist billionaire Trump by presenting him as a threat to the entire post-war framework of US foreign policy and unfit to be commander-in-chief. The Clinton campaign has hysterically denounced the Republican candidate as an agent of the Russian government, who could derail the US confrontation with the Putin regime in Eastern Europe.

Beazley and Carr, however, are not merely speaking as mouthpieces of the US military establishment. Their comments express fears within the Australian ruling elite that the Republican candidate threatens the US-Australia alliance, which has been the cornerstone of Australian imperialism's ability to pursue its own predatory interests in the Asia-Pacific and internationally since World War II.

The two Labor figures have raised their concerns as the US intensifies its "pivot" and military build-up throughout the Asia-Pacific region against China. Carr and Beazley take a somewhat different tactical approaches to the dilemma confronting the Australian ruling elite as it attempts to balance between its longstanding military alliance with the US and its economic dependence on China, the country's largest trading partner.

Beazley, a former defence minister, also known as "Bomber Beazley," is a wholehearted supporter of Australia's integration into the US military expansion in Asia. His article began by citing US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter, who declared at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June that "the US-Australia alliance is

more and more a global one.” Carter referenced Australia’s support for US “freedom of navigation” provocations against China to challenge its territorial claims in the South China Sea, and Australian participation in the US-led war in Iraq, aimed at ensuring US hegemony over the geo-strategically critical Middle-East.

Beazley’s article asked, “what on earth do we say, and where do we begin, with a victor in the presidential race who during the campaign has trashed the entirety of the alliance system, and the liberal international rules-based order, that have underpinned trade and broader global relationships since 1945?”

Referring to the US, Beazley wrote of “the depth of our relationship and the massive character of our mutual investment, which far exceeds any American pairing in the region outside Japan.” His comment was an oblique reference to Australia’s key role in US preparations for war against China.

Beazley pointed to the establishment of a new US Marine base in Darwin under the Gillard government, and the ever-closer ties between the Australian and US armed forces, including at the level of military technology. Joint US-Australian military facilities, Beazley wrote, are “integrated into our intelligence system and our military’s operational capabilities.” Of a possible Trump presidency, he bluntly stated, “We can’t afford to sit back and let mayhem rule.”

In his comments on “Q&A,” Carr, who has been critical of the US “pivot,” took a more cautious tack. He declared: “We’d be in the peculiar position as Australians, an ally [and] a treaty partner to the United States, of watching a President Trump unravel arrangements that have been considered vital to avoiding nuclear exchanges in the region in which we live.”

Carr rhetorically asked whether Australia should “move sideways from the military integration that we’ve got with America at the present time,” in the event of a Trump presidency. He said he would be “very uncomfortable” with Australian troops being integrated into a US fleet commanded by Trump. Carr also warned of the prospect of South Korea and Japan developing their own nuclear capabilities if the US withdrew its nuclear protection from those countries.

Carr was giving voice to the sentiments of layers of the Australian ruling elite who fear the dangers

involved in Australia’s integration into the US military build-up against China and its potential to damage economic relations throughout the Asia-Pacific, particularly with Beijing.

At the same time, responding to a question from the moderator, Carr made clear he was not calling for the repudiation of the US-Australia alliance. In other words, his concerns about the “pivot” are entirely tactical and centre on how best to advance the interests of Australian imperialism.

That Carr and Beazley come together, despite their differences, to denounce Trump and implicitly back the Clinton campaign, underscores the dependence of the Australian ruling class on the US military alliance. In the event of war in the Asia Pacific, the Australian military, its bases and other facilities are so integrated with the US that Australia would be automatically involved.

Carr’s claim that only a Trump presidency risks a nuclear conflict is false. As former US secretary of state under Obama, Clinton was one of the chief architects of the US “pivot” and aggressively pursued its implementation. In 2010, she provocatively declared that Washington had a “national interest” in the South China Sea, effectively transforming localised territorial disputes into a major flashpoint for war.

Over the past year, the US Navy has already conducted three “freedom of navigation” operations, deliberately intruding within the 12-nautical-mile territorial limits around Chinese islets in the South China Sea. These reckless operations are just one of the potential triggers for a conflict between the US and China that could escalate out of control into a nuclear exchange. The US war drive stems not from particular personalities in the White House but from the desperate attempt of American imperialism to use military force to maintain its global hegemony.



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