

Japan, UK to sign military agreement next month

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Japan and the United Kingdom are preparing to sign a new agreement in December that will facilitate and further develop military cooperation between the two and with the United States. It comes as part of Washington's efforts to tighten its network of alliances throughout the Indo-Pacific as part of its war drive against China.

Citing two anonymous sources familiar with the discussions between London and Tokyo, the *Financial Times* (FT) reported on November 6 that the deal, known as a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), will make joint military exercises and logistics between the UK and Japan easier, while also simplifying the process of troops from one country entering the other. Talks on the deal began in May when Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson in London.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry stated that Kishida and current British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke by phone on November 4 with the two agreeing “to forge an even closer bilateral relationship,” while also pledging “to accelerate the consultation toward an early signature of a Reciprocal Access Agreement.”

Zach Cooper, from the right-wing American Enterprise Institute in Washington, told the FT, “A reciprocal access agreement between Japan and the UK would make it easier for the two sides to exercise and operate together, which will allow British armed forces to deploy and train more easily in the Indo-Pacific region.

“For decades, alliances in Asia have been linked together via the US in what is described as a hub-and-spokes model. Now some US allies, including Japan, the UK and Australia, are serving as hubs themselves.”

What this means is that the RAA will also make it easier for visiting soldiers from one US ally, such as the

UK, to use another ally, in this case Japan, as a base of operations. It will allow the US to not only conduct joint war exercises with its allies in the region, but also further cooperation and planning for a war the US is actively working to instigate with China. In recent months, the US has stepped up this planning with an increased number of large-scale military drills on China's doorstep around the Korean Peninsula, using the supposed North Korean “threat” as a pretext.

Japan is deepening its cooperation with other close US allies. Tokyo signed another RAA with Australia in January, its first such deal with another country outside of the US. Tokyo and Canberra also recently signed a high-level security pact in October. Both countries are central to Washington's war strategy.

Tokyo is working on a similar RAA with the Philippines. In addition, Tokyo is working on repairing its relationship with South Korea, both of which the US sees as crucial to the anti-ballistic missile system it is building throughout the region.

Washington is tightening the noose around China with military alliances, while inflaming tensions with Beijing, particularly over Taiwan. This includes the AUKUS alliance, comprising Australia, the UK, and US, and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, between the US, Japan, Australia, and India. Washington also recently announced plans for the de facto permanent stationing of nuclear-capable strategic assets in South Korea for the first time since 1991 and for nuclear-capable B-52 bombers in Australia.

While backing the US, both Japan and the UK have their own imperialist interests. Contrary to claims by the bourgeoisie that these alliances are a necessary response to Chinese “aggression” or to prevent “Ukraine today becoming East Asia tomorrow,” in the words of Kishida, Tokyo and London forging alliances

that will allow them to project their power more strongly throughout the region.

This is what motivates Japanese imperialism—responsible for widespread and heinous war crimes in the first half of the 20th century—not defense of “democracy” in Taiwan or other regions of the Asia-Pacific, which Tokyo previously colonized.

For Japan, this also involves casting aside restrictions on its armed forces, stemming from Article 9 of the constitution, known as the Pacifist Clause. This clause explicitly bars Tokyo from maintaining a military and from waging wars overseas. However, agreements like the RAA with the UK, demonstrate that whatever laws exist on paper will be no impediment to remilitarization.

Tokyo is working with the UK to jointly develop a next-generation fighter jet, the first time Japan has worked on such a major military project with a country other than the US. Tokyo is also working on acquiring offensive weaponry that includes Tomahawk cruise missiles from the US and converting its naval “helicopter carriers” into full-fledged aircraft carriers. Former prime minister and anti-China hawk Shinzo Abe initiated discussions in Tokyo in February on hosting US nuclear weapons.

The British are also stepping up their involvement in the region. In its March 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, London stated, “In the decade ahead, the UK will deepen our engagement in the Indo-Pacific, establishing a greater and more persistent presence than any other European country.”

First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff Ben Key told *Nikkei Asia* in an interview published November 9, “We can't expect America to be the world's policeman, by any stretch of the imagination. We all have an obligation to protect free and open oceans,”—language commonly used to demonize China.

Key was in Japan for the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), held in Yokohama last Monday and Tuesday. Participants included naval leaders from 20 WPNS-member countries and six observer nations, which included the UK.

Key stated in the *Nikkei Asia* interview, “I confidently predict you will see more visits by the Royal Navy to this region. We’re talking on board a Royal Navy warship that is currently utilizing Japanese

dockyard skills to allow us to do some maintenance work. That shows a pretty clear commitment to the sort of way we see the relationship going.”

The military intervention of Britain into Asia even as the US-NATO war against Russia intensifies underscores that fact that the conflict in Europe is viewed as the prelude to a global war aimed against China. US imperialism, backed by its allies, is determined to maintain its global dominance by subjugating the Eurasian landmass and its enormous natural and human resources even at the risk of a nuclear catastrophe.



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