

Australian PM in Washington to give full support for eruption of imperialist violence

Oscar Grenfell
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Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has just arrived in Washington for a four-day visit that will feature discussions with the top levels of the US government, including President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The visit was long-planned, but it takes on a particular significance now, amid a massive eruption of imperialist violence all over the world, spearheaded by the Biden administration.

In comments to the press before his departure, Albanese declared that his trip would underscore the “shared values” of the Australian and US governments.

The character of those “values” is currently on display in Gaza. Biden is involved in orchestrating the worst war crimes of the century, overseeing and aiding Israel’s massive bombardment of Palestinian civilians.

Albanese and his Labor government have been extremely bellicose, continually proclaiming Israel’s “right to defend itself,” as the Zionist regime perpetrates an onslaught that has the nature of a genocide. Labor governments, at the federal and state levels, have denounced mass protests opposing Israel’s bombing, including by attempting to ban a demonstration in Sydney.

The day before Albanese arrives, it was reported that Biden had been contacting the leaders of the European powers and other allies, such as Canada, to ensure that there would be no deviation from full support for the Israeli bombardment. Biden is campaigning against any turn by these powers, however limited, under conditions of the largest global anti-war protests since the criminal invasion of Iraq in 2003.

He has no cause for concern with Albanese. As he was leaving Australia, the prime minister declared: “President Biden’s agenda is one that we support and we will be urging support for all of the legislation that is required for AUKUS.”

Australian noted: “Anthony Albanese will lobby US congress members to pass Joe Biden’s bill promising billions for the AUKUS submarine program and military aid for Israel and Ukraine...”

That is, Albanese will actively campaign, within the US, for the massive expansion of American militarism that Biden is overseeing. Albanese’s reference to “legislation” is the \$105 billion military spending package announced late last week by the US president.

That measure demonstrates that the massacre of the Palestinians, and associated threats of a war against Iran, is a focal point of a global military agenda being set by the White House. In addition to vast sums for the Israeli military to carry out mass murder in Gaza, the funding will include massive allocations to the Ukrainian regime, which is functioning as a proxy for an active war being waged by Washington against Russia.

It is clear that AUKUS, the militarist pact between Australia, the US and Britain, explicitly directed against China, will feature heavily in Albanese’s visit. According to the *Australian*, his lobbying efforts will centre on a push to ensure the US Congress passes funding and associated legislative measures, facilitating Australia’s acquisition of a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines.

That purchase, which is estimated to cost Australia up to \$368 billion, is the centrepiece of a far broader militarisation of the country aimed at transforming it into a hub of the US preparations for war against China.

Amid the carnage in the Middle East and the crisis of Ukraine’s war effort, Albanese declared that he will push for the Biden administration to “remain focused on the Indo-Pacific region.” He added: “We do have strategic competition in this region.”

Those remarks are fully in line with the essential strategy of American imperialism. While it sees threats to its interests in every corner of the globe its fundamental strategic orientation, as outlined in multiple Pentagon,

White House and Defence Department statements, is to prepare for war with China, which is viewed as the chief threat to US global hegemony.

Albanese's active lobbying efforts for this war drive in the US underscore that Australia is not functioning as some sort of US puppet. Rather, dominant sections of the ruling class and military-intelligence apparatus, heavily integrated with their US counterparts, are committed to the program of confrontation with China to advance Australian imperialism's own predatory interests in the Pacific.

To that end, the Labor government has been functioning as an attack dog throughout the region. Since its election in May 2022, senior ministers have continuously toured the Indo-Pacific, insisting that its leaders align with the aggression against China and threatening them with "consequences" if they do not.

Last week, in the lead up to Albanese's tour of Washington, Defence Minister Richard Marles visited Japan and South Korea. Because of their geographic proximity to China and their military capabilities, the two countries would be crucial to any US-led war.

In both Seoul and Tokyo, Marles sought to fortify closer ties between the two nations, which has been a key focus the Biden administration. He insisted that cooperation between the two should be deepened, supposedly to ensure "security" in the Indo-Pacific.

The bellicose and militarist thrust of the visit was underscored by Marles' comments at a forum in Seoul. He declared that a conflict involving China over control of Taiwan would be "so grave," that the various regional bystanders "could not afford to be passive bystanders." The remark was in somewhat vague terms. But the clear implication was that Australia would participate in such a conflict—a repudiation of Marles' previous assertions that no such commitment has been made.

Marles declared that: "The most consequential risk we face is the resumption of great power conflict in our lifetime." He linked growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific to the war that is underway in Europe, branding the Russian invasion of Ukraine as the consequence of a "failure of deterrence."

This turns reality on its head. The reactionary Russian invasion was deliberately provoked by the US and NATO to pursue longstanding plans for a conflict aimed at inflicting a crippling defeat on the Putin regime.

Taiwan is similarly being used as the means of goading China into a disastrous war that would allow direct US intervention. It is the Biden administration, following on

from its predecessors, that is militarising Taiwan and chipping away at the previous One China policy under which the US and the international community de facto recognised Beijing as the sole government of all China, including Taiwan.

Marles' references to deterrence were a clear call for the further US-led transfer of arms to Taipei, a program that is well underway.

In Tokyo, Marles reinforced a strategic partnership between Australia and Japan unveiled by the Labor government a year ago. Labor has also expanded reciprocal access agreements, allowing for the military forces of Australia and Japan to dock at and "rotate" through each others bases and ports.

According to a readout of Marles' meeting with Japanese Minister of Defense Kihara Minoru, the two discussed "recent milestones in the strategic partnership."

These included: "First applications of the Reciprocal Access Agreement last month in our mutual deployment exercises of F-35As, including for Exercise Bushido Guardian [a Japanese military drill], and the "live-firing of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's surface-to-air and surface-to-ship missiles during Exercise Talisman Sabre using Australia's training ranges."

The two also underlined plans for "Australian Defence Force (ADF) participation in Japan-United States exercises Yama Sakura in November 2023 and Keen Edge in February 2024," as well as "progress under the JDSC to enhance the scope, objectives and forms of enhanced operational cooperation."

The scope of the bilateral agreements being developed under the umbrella of the US alliance and various broader fora, can only be understood as a clear threat to China and preparation for war. Even as they are directing in Gaza some of the worst crimes since World War II, the imperialist powers are preparing predatory military operations between nuclear-armed powers that threaten the very future of humanity.



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