

Japan to join AUKUS military pact against China

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The stage has been set for Japan to become involved in the AUKUS military pact between the US, Britain and Australia when Japanese Prime Minister Kishida meets with US President Biden in Washington on Wednesday. The integration of a key US ally into AUKUS is part and parcel of the Biden administration's accelerating preparations throughout the Asia Pacific for war with China.

US ambassador to Tokyo Rahm Emanuel suggested last week that Japan was “about to become the first additional Pillar II partner” of AUKUS. He hailed the Japanese government's decision to ease restrictions on military exports, saying it “opens up an industrial capacity in Japan to be part of the solution to the global challenge.”

In a statement issued yesterday, the British, Australian and US defence ministers together announced that they would consider bringing Japan into Pillar II of AUKUS. That involves joint research and development of hi-tech military systems, ranging from artificial intelligence and quantum computing to undersea capabilities and hypersonic weapons.

“Recognising Japan's strengths and its close bilateral defence partnerships with all three countries, we are considering co-operation with Japan on AUKUS Pillar II advanced capability projects,” the ministers said. While the statement gave no indication of when and how Japan would become involved, it provides the framework for Kishida and Biden to formally set the process in motion.

The AUKUS pact, first announced in 2021, resurrects the World War II alliance between the US, Britain and Australia that fought Japan, but now in preparation for conflict with China. The provision of nuclear-powered submarines to Australia at the estimated cost of \$A368 billion, as well as hypersonic missiles and hi-tech

research and development, are key aspects of AUKUS.

The formalisation of AUKUS has more the character of integrating Australia and the UK into a central command for war with China. Britain and Australia are already US allies and members of the top-level “Five Eyes” intelligence sharing network with the US, along with Canada and New Zealand.

The incorporation of Japan into AUKUS Tier II projects paves the way for its full integration as an AUKUS partner. That has been ruled out in the short term. Nevertheless, the involvement of Japan, the world's fourth largest economy, with a substantial and rapidly expanding military, is clearly aimed at strengthening the anti-China pact. Japan is already part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue—a quasi-alliance with the US, Australia and India.

The *Financial Times* reported yesterday that Australia, Britain and sections of the US political and military establishment had misgivings about incorporating Japan into AUKUS, citing concerns in particular about sharing highly sensitive intelligence with Tokyo. The Biden administration, however, pressed for Japan's inclusion.

US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell has aggressively promoted the extension of AUKUS to Japan. Speaking at the CNAS think tank in Washington last week, Campbell said “Japan has taken some of those steps [to protect sensitive secrets], but not all of them.”

Campbell also made it absolutely clear that AUKUS is aimed at war with China. While the Australian Labor government insists that Canberra will determine the use of its nuclear submarines, Campbell hailed the benefits of Australian, British and US submarines “operating in close co-ordination that could deliver conventional ordnance from long distances.”

“Those have enormous implications in a variety of scenarios, including in cross-strait circumstances,” Campbell added—an obvious reference to war with China across the Taiwan Strait. The Biden administration has been deliberately goading Beijing into a conflict over Taiwan, by boosting arms sales to Taipei and all but tearing up the One China policy that recognises the island as part of China.

The accelerating war drive against China is part of a wider conflict evolving globally. Britain and Australia are already involved in the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and, along with the US, fully back Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza. US imperialism, which has been building up military forces and alliances in the Indo-Pacific over the past decade, is determined to maintain its global hegemony at all costs and regards China as the chief obstacle to that objective.

The comments by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at last week’s NATO summit to mark the alliance’s 75th anniversary show that NATO is preparing for worldwide conflict. “We know that our security is not regional—it is global,” he said. “The war in Ukraine illustrates this clearly. Russia’s friends in Asia are vital for continuing its war of aggression. China is propping up Russia’s war economy... North Korea and Iran are delivering substantial supplies of weapons and ammunition.”

Beijing, which has objected to AUKUS since its formation, reacted to the latest, unmistakable threat in measured language. Beijing foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said China was “gravely concerned” about Japan joining AUKUS. “We oppose relevant countries cobbling together exclusive groupings and stoking bloc confrontation,” she said.

Obliquely referring to Japan’s invasion of China in the 1930s and the death and destruction caused by World War II throughout the Pacific, Mao declared: “Japan needs to earnestly draw lessons from history and stay prudent on military and security issues.” In China, the Japanese military was responsible for millions of civilian deaths and terrible atrocities such as the Nanking massacre.

Kishida’s trip to Washington will mark a significant step down the road to a US-led war with China. Not only is his meeting with Biden set to announce Japan’s integration into AUKUS but also the biggest upgrade of the US-Japan Security Treaty since its inception in

1960. According to an article last week in the *Financial Times*, the upgrade is “to restructure the US military command in Japan to strengthen operational planning and exercises between the nations.”

Closer joint operational planning and exercises are essential preparations for a modern, hi-tech war. The US maintains permanent military bases throughout Japan manned by some 55,000 personnel and encompassing all arms of the military—Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines. The greatest concentration is in Okinawa—the southernmost part of Japan’s island chain, directly adjacent both to Taiwan and the Chinese mainland.

The *New York Times* reported that Biden and Kishida are expected to discuss the formation of a joint defence council to examine further Japanese military exports to the US, including additional Patriot missile systems, cruise missiles and jets used to train fighter pilots. Washington is also seeking assistance in repairing and maintaining US Navy warships so they do not have to leave the region.

After meeting on Wednesday, Biden and Kishida will hold a summit with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.—the first such trilateral meeting. Billed as boosting maritime cooperation in the South China Sea, the summit is also directed against China amid mounting tensions between Manila and Beijing over territorial conflicts, particularly control of the Second Thomas Shoal. According to the *Financial Times*, Biden intends to greatly magnify tensions by warning China that the US-Philippines Mutual Defence Treaty applies to any conflict over the tiny reef.

Increasingly, the meetings convened by the US with its military allies in Asia assume the character of war summits as the Biden administration exacerbates tensions with China, tightens its military encirclement and nakedly prepares for war.



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