

Top Australian, Japanese ministers prepare for war against China

Peter Symonds
9 September 2024

The Australian and Japanese foreign and defence ministers met in Queenscliff, Australia last week for their annual 2+2 summit. Their joint communiqué shows just how advanced is the planning not just between these two key American military allies, but more broadly throughout the Indo-Pacific, for a US-led war against China.

No longer is there any pretence that China is not being targeted. The military preparations and build-up are, of course, all taken in the name of maintaining “peace,” “stability” and the “international rules-based system.” But China is named and branded as the destabiliser, threat to peace and the post-World War II order, in which Washington sets the rules.

The ministers repeated the anti-China propaganda mantra now routine at every such summit: concerns over China’s “dangerous and coercive activities towards the Philippines,” its militarisation of disputed islets in the South China Sea, and tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

Making clear the international dimensions of the conflicts unfolding, they added their “unwavering” support for Ukraine, condemnation of Moscow and demand that China fall into line with the US-NATO war on Russia in Ukraine.

In reality, US imperialism and its allies have been waging wars of aggression for the past three decades in the Middle East and Central Asia in bid to maintain American global dominance. Having provoked a war with Russia in Ukraine, backed the Israeli genocide in Gaza and wider aggression in the Middle East, the US is accelerating its war preparations against China, which it regards as the chief threat to its global position.

Within that context, both Japan and Australia are central to the Pentagon’s war planning. Japan, which

confronts China directly in Northeast Asia, is home to the largest number of US military bases and troops in the world, across all spheres—air force, army, navy and Marines. Australia’s military bases in its north and west, adjacent to the Indian Ocean and key naval choke points in Southeast Asia, have been opened up to US Marines, warplanes, warships and submarines, including those capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

The 2+2 talks last week discussed far greater integration of Australian and Japanese military forces with the American military in the Indo-Pacific, as well as intelligence sharing and the development of military technology and weapons’ systems.

The ministers foreshadowed joint training of Japan’s Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade with the US Marines based on a rotational basis in the northern Australian city of Darwin. The Japanese brigade has been established with the assistance of the US Marine Corp over the past decade amid tensions with China over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea.

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles hailed the establishment of “a rotational presence of Japanese marines in Darwin,” together with the 2,500 US Marines already there. “This is a really huge opportunity for our three defence forces to operate in an amphibious context,” he enthused.

The build-up of US and Japanese amphibious forces in the region has an obvious purpose: preparations for the seizure of Chinese-controlled islets in the South China Sea as well as, potentially, amphibious landings on the Chinese mainland.

The summit underscored the importance of “reciprocal deployments” of US, Japanese, and Australian F-35 advanced fighter aircraft, and greater trilateral air cooperation, as agreed in a memorandum

signed during Exercise Pitch Black 2024 in August. These aerial war games, based outside Darwin, were the largest in the exercise's history, involving 20 participating nations and over 140 war planes in "high intensity" combat training.

At a joint press conference, Marles declared that while discussions about F-35 deployments were still ongoing, both countries were keen to see "more training, more exercises, more people-to-people links between our two air forces... We will look at further opportunities for us to see our air forces work together, including F35s, but not just F35s."

Other military cooperation included:

- The reciprocal establishment of liaison officers in the military headquarters in Japan and in Australia—to begin with Australian liaison officers in Japan in November.

- An expansion of military intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance cooperation in the Indo-Pacific that will involve the involvement of Australian personnel in the Japan-US Bilateral Information Analysis Cell.

- The expansion of military research and development projects involving Japan, Australia and the US, including bilateral research by Australia and Japan into robotic and Autonomous Systems for Undersea Warfare—in other words, underwater drones.

- The integration of Japan into research projects of Pillar II of AUKUS—the top-level military pact between the US, Britain and Australia.

- The involvement of Australian troops in next year's Exercise Orient Shield—an annual large-scale exercise involving US and Japanese land forces.

The closer integration of Japan and Australia with US war planning is central to the wider web of US-led military alliances and strategic partnerships that encircle China, including the Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue or "Quad" involving the US, Japan and Australia with India.

Last week's 2+2 meeting called for the boosting collaboration in maritime aircraft patrols. The ministers also committed to strengthening ties with the Philippines, particularly in maritime activities aimed against China in the South China Sea. Both Japan and Australia have established bilateral military ties with the Philippines.

Significantly, the ministers agreed to strengthen ties

with NATO as it prosecutes its war against Russia in Ukraine. Japan, Australia, South Korea and New Zealand form the Indo-Pacific Partners group (IP4) that collaborates with NATO. Japan is to host a meeting this financial year involving NATO, its member states and the IP4 to discuss "strategic communications."

The acceleration of military collaboration and integration between Japan and Australia, urged on by Washington, takes place as both countries vastly boost their military spending. Under the AUKUS agreement, the Australian navy is to be armed with nuclear-powered attack submarines at an estimated cost of \$368 billion. Military spending has reached a record \$50 billion a year and will continue to rise.

Japan, the world's fourth largest economy, is engaged in a massive remilitarisation in an ever-more glaring flouting of its post-World War II constitution, which bans the threat or use of force to settle international disputes and declares "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be sustained."

The Japanese government has foreshadowed the doubling of the military budget for its so-called self-defence forces and acquiring what are patently offensive weapons, including cruise missiles. It plans to manufacture its own hypersonic guided missiles and advanced fighter jets.

Alongside this military expansion, Japan is engaged in forging military ties throughout the Indo-Pacific—including with Australia, South Korea, India, the Philippines and other countries. While currently proceeding under the umbrella of the alliance with Washington, Japanese imperialism has its own economic and strategic interests at stake and is establishing the basis for aggressively pursuing them.

Far from bringing peace and stability to Asia, the US and its allies are recklessly fuelling a conflict in Asia between nuclear-armed powers that could rapidly merge with the wars already underway in Europe and the Middle East, with disastrous consequences for humanity.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact