

# War: The great unmentionable in the Australian election campaign

Max Boddy, SEP candidate for the Senate in NSW  
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The official Australian election campaign, as it's being waged by the major parties and the corporate media, is a fairy tale. Under conditions of huge global shocks and instability, Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Liberal-National Coalition leader Peter Dutton are presenting Australia as the land of exception, which will be unscathed by the developing international storms.

This is a fraud on every level, economic, social and political, but most glaringly on the question of militarism and war, which the major parties are trying to exclude from the campaign entirely.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is the only party sounding the alarm. As we warn in our election statement: "A new world war has not yet been declared. But the world is at war." The same contradictions that led to two catastrophic conflagrations last century are preparing a third, but this one would begin with nuclear weapons and would threaten the very existence of humanity.

The SEP is not only issuing these necessary and urgent warnings. Together with our sister parties in the world Trotskyist movement, we are fighting to build the international anti-war movement of the working class that can and must prevent the disaster that capitalism is tobogganing towards and guarantee a future for humanity.

These are not far away questions. Contrary to the official depictions, Australia is already involved in war globally. Under the Labor government, it has diplomatically, politically and materially supported some of the worst war crimes since the Holocaust, in the US-Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

Those atrocities are a signal that there are no "red lines" the imperialist powers will not cross, not only in the Middle East but everywhere.

Australia has been one of the largest non-NATO contributors to the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, providing more than \$1.5 billion, most of it in offensive weaponry. The claims that this war has been about defending "little Ukraine" are a fraud. Russia's reactionary invasion was deliberately provoked by the US and NATO,

which wanted to inflict a catastrophic defeat on Moscow as part of their drive to control the Eurasian landmass.

For the major powers, the defeat of Russia is just a stepping stone to war with China, which is viewed as the chief threat to American imperialist dominance. It is in Asia that Australia is playing a linchpin role as an attack dog of Washington and a frontline state for war with China.

On that, as on every aspect of war, there is not a slither of difference between Labor and the Coalition. Both are champions of the US-Australia alliance and of deepening ties with Washington, previously under "Genocide Joe" Biden and now under the fascist gangster Donald Trump.

The bipartisanship is demonstrated by the AUKUS pact with the US and the UK, which is the crucial mechanism for militarising the Indo-Pacific in preparation for war against China. AUKUS was initiated under former Coalition Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and has been the central priority of Albanese's Labor government since it came to office in May, 2022.

Key to AUKUS is Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines from the US, before jointly building a new design with the UK, at a combined cost of \$368 billion.

When speaking of the AUKUS subs, government officials present them as a "defensive" capability. But, in little reported comments earlier this week, Morrison, untethered by the obligations of office, blurted out the real purpose of the subs: for Australia to join an offensive war against China.

"The point about nuclear-powered submarines is they can go anywhere, and they can go anywhere you need them to go, and to do so stealthily," Morrison told the *Kyodo Times*. And there was already a destination in mind. The Taiwan Strait and the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea "present potential flashpoints and conflicts which could very much draw Australia in," Morrison stated.

Those are flashpoints that have been deliberately inflamed by successive US administrations. They have promoted Taiwanese separatism, including by providing Taipei with advanced weaponry, despite previous US governments and

the international community having recognised Taiwan as part of China. And they have encouraged Japanese claims to ownership of the Senkakus, which are also claimed by China.

The Taiwan Strait is 7,382 kilometres from Australia. The narrow waterway between Taiwan and China extends to the Chinese mainland. The Senkaku Islands are 5,781 kilometres from Australia, but 330 kilometres from China.

What Morrison was admitting is that the entire purpose of the nuclear-powered subs is to stalk the Chinese coast, in preparation for joining a massive US-led onslaught on the Chinese navy and the Chinese mainland.

The AUKUS subs are just one component of a broader militarisation. The Labor government has completed Australia's transformation into a launching pad for war throughout the Indo-Pacific. US basing in the north and west of the continent has been massively expanded, included through the stationing of strike capabilities that potentially carry nuclear weapons. Every branch of the military is being equipped with missiles, for "impactful projection" across the region.

Already, Labor has taken annual military spending to more than \$56 billion. But far more is being demanded. Behind the backs of the population, a frenetic discussion is underway in ruling circles over an even greater militarisation that must occur once the election is out of the way.

There is a broad consensus in strategic circles, that military spending must be boosted to 2.5 percent of gross domestic product immediately. That would mean an additional \$14 billion a year. But the US has publicly demanded 3 percent, which could see defence spending skyrocket to \$100 billion or more annually by the end of the decade.

That means huge cuts to education, healthcare and social services.

And as in the US, under Trump, it means a turn to dictatorship.

That was spelt out in a comment this week by war hawk and retired major-general Mick Ryan. He wrote that the military build-up had to be "a whole-of-nation undertaking, not just a Defence endeavour." The Australian people needed to be told the "perils we face" and the "resources that are required."

Ryan stated: "Australia urgently needs a mobilisation plan; that is, to appropriate all national assets—people, resources, science and technology for an expanded defence capacity in a conflict." That is a proposal for military rule, with literally every aspect of society subordinated to war.

Ryan demanded a "a serious debate about national service," i.e., conscription of youth for war, which he said is "uncontroversial in many other democracies."

This agenda will provoke widespread opposition from

workers and young people. But that opposition must be based on a clear political program and perspective.

For 18 months, there have been major protests against the genocide in Gaza. But those protests have been derailed by the Greens and pseudo-left groups, who have insisted that all that can be done is to appeal to the Albanese government, which is facilitating the genocide, to change course. That is a deliberate dead-end, aimed at subordinating opposition to the very political establishment that is on the war path.

The alternative is the fight for a socialist and internationalist perspective. The SEP fights for these principles as the basis of a new anti-war movement:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.

- The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.

- The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organisations of the capitalist class.

- The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilising the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.

Support our election campaign and join the SEP to take forward this crucial struggle!

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