

# Australian and New Zealand governments boost anti-China military integration

John Braddock  
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The Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese, and New Zealand's Christopher Luxon, met in Australia on June 6 for their annual leaders' meeting.

The countries are crucial allies of Washington in the Indo-Pacific and are deeply involved in US-led imperialist wars in every part of the globe—from the Middle East to the US-NATO proxy war against Russia over Ukraine, and war preparations against China. These are all fronts in a developing third world war, which threatens a catastrophe far greater than the two world wars of the last century.

Both ruling elites face intractable economic and political crises at home. Australia's Labor government and NZ's National Party-led coalition are profoundly unpopular as the working classes confront attacks on living standards, exacerbated by the Iran quagmire and the Trump administration's tariffs. Both governments are massively increasing military spending.

The meeting's Joint Statement acknowledged the 75th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty, describing it as the "foundation of our Alliance and our defence and security partnership." ANZUS, composed of Australia, New Zealand and the US, was formed after World War II to enforce Washington's hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. It was the formal basis of the allies' involvement in imperialist wars from Korea and Vietnam to Afghanistan and Iraq.

The leaders endorsed the "Anzac 2035: Operationalising the Alliance Joint Statement," issued recently by their respective Defence Ministers. They welcomed its "focus on force posture, combined operations and exercises, force preparedness, resilience, defence industry integration and Pacific security." The two countries are already building an integrated military force aimed at China.

In the face of popular opposition to the AUKUS military pact between Australia, the US and UK, under

which Australia is acquiring nuclear-powered attack submarines and providing basing arrangements for US forces, the pair lauded AUKUS' "capability and technology sharing partnership." Successive NZ governments, including Labour, have for years been angling to join "Tier 2" of AUKUS, which would involve sharing advanced technological hardware.

AUKUS intensifies Australia's role as a regional attack dog for American imperialism. The total cost, estimated at \$A368 billion, will be extracted by vastly ratcheting up the exploitation of the working class. New Zealand's similar trajectory saw the recent budget commit a \$NZ2 billion increase to the military alongside sweeping attacks on public services, thousands of job cuts, an increase in student fees and cuts to welfare benefits.

Albanese and Luxon highlighted the "closeness" of the countries' security and intelligence partnership amid "an increasingly uncertain and contested geostrategic environment." Australia and New Zealand are members of the US-led Five Eyes alliance, which also includes the UK and Canada. The global spy network provides intelligence operations in the Middle East and secret war plans targeting China.

A section of the prime ministers' statement is devoted to strengthening Canberra and Wellington's neo-colonial stranglehold over the Pacific. The day before the leaders' meeting, Luxon visited the Pacific Policing Initiative (PPI) hub in Brisbane. He praised the Pacific Islands police chiefs and the PPI for "enhancing strategic collaboration and policing capabilities in the region."

The PPI involves multi-country Pacific police units, with up to 200 officers, trained and led by the Australian Federal Police. Primarily intended to counter China's influence in the region, the units can serve as rapid deployment forces for police-military interventions against civil unrest. Following the 2024 Kanak uprising in New Caledonia and riots in Papua New Guinea, rebellions

are anticipated across the impoverished region, where local peoples are ground down by inflation and deepening inequality.

The leaders also commended the establishment of a new Pacific Response Group (PRG), saying it brings together “regional militaries to strengthen Pacific-led responses to Pacific humanitarian crises and disasters.” Like the PPI, the integration of Pacific militaries is aimed at developing operational collaboration to deal with “security challenges,” targeting China. New Zealand will host the PRG headquarters from next month.

The anti-China thrust of the meeting was highlighted by statements condemning so-called “intensification of destabilising activities” in both the South China and East China Seas, including “the militarisation of disputed features and instances of unsafe and unprofessional behaviour.” Albanese and Luxon opposed “any unilateral action to change the status quo” at the Taiwan Strait, purportedly “encouraging dialogue rather than coercion or the use of force.”

The statements, implicitly blaming China, turn reality on its head. They repeat the propaganda deployed by Washington to demonise Beijing and reinforce US imperialist positioning in the region. It is not China, but the Trump administration that is engaged in a vast buildup and expansion of its military activities in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth recently demanded that local allies increase their military budgets to at least 3.5 percent of GDP, as part of US-led war preparations.

The meeting coincided with a hyped-up anti-China campaign by both governments after Beijing barred four New Zealand MPs from entering China for a year, in retaliation for the politicians’ visit to Taipei. China’s Foreign Ministry stated that the MPs had “crossed the red line” by undermining the One China principle.

China’s NZ Embassy emphasized that “MPs are not ordinary citizens” and they had met with high-ranking Taiwanese political figures, thereby “sending the wrong signals.” China consistently opposes such visits by members of other countries’ legislatures and New Zealand “should not be surprised,” a statement read.

Luxon told reporters that he would raise the matter directly with China. New Zealand MPs were “free to see who they want to see” and China’s reaction was “entirely inappropriate,” he declared. Luxon said New Zealand continued to observe the One China policy, which acknowledges China’s claim to Taiwan.

Australia’s Foreign Minister Penny Wong weighed in,

saying her officials would also “make representations” on the matter. “We agree with the principle expressed by New Zealand that members of parliament, including the Australian parliament, are free to make their own decisions about travel,” Wong declared.

Following similar provocations by prominent US delegations, the visits are part of a conscious escalation of tensions to undermine the One China policy and signify unequivocal support for Taiwan in any conflict with China. The NZ group—from the National Party, the far-right ACT and NZ First and the opposition Labour Party—is connected with the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, an international initiative dedicated to “standing together to demand accountability from China.”

IPAC’s listed partners and contributors include the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, funded by the Taiwanese government, a Japanese parliamentary grouping, and the US National Endowment for Democracy, which carries out the type of influence operations formerly conducted by the CIA.

Attempts by the ruling classes to whip up anti-China sentiment are, however, beginning to fall flat. A survey released this month shows that, for the first time in a decade, New Zealanders are more likely to see China as a “friend” than the United States.

The “Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples” survey, by the Asia New Zealand Foundation, found that 43 percent of people viewed China as a friend, up from 38 percent last year. The percentage who regarded the US as a friend dropped dramatically from 61 to 39 percent.

While this is indicative of overwhelming public opposition to war, experience has demonstrated that imperialist governments are impervious to protests urging them to change course. The urgent task is to build a socialist, anti-war movement to unite workers and young people across Australia, NZ, Asia, the Pacific and internationally to put an end to capitalism, which is the root cause of war, social inequality and dictatorship.



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