

Australia, Fiji sign “Ocean of Peace Alliance” to escalate anti-China offensive

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During a diplomatic trip to the southwest Pacific last week, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met with Fiji’s leader Sitiveni Rabuka in Suva on July 6 and signed two major treaties: one a military pact aimed against China, the other updating an existing strategic agreement.

Fiji, the region’s second largest Pacific nation behind Papua New Guinea and occupying a key strategic location, is a particular focus of imperialist manoeuvring. Both agreements significantly escalate the integration of Fiji, potentially along with other South Pacific states, into the US-led network of anti-China strategic pacts.

The cynically named Ocean of Peace Alliance, or Veitacini Mutual Defence Treaty, is a new formal military alliance. Veitacini is a Fijian word that carries a particular connotation: mutual protection among kin, not mere cooperation. The other pact, the Vuvale Treaty similarly alludes to Australia and Fiji being part of the same “family.”

Albanese declared the treaties are among the most significant Australia has undertaken with any country. “This level of ambition is possible because Australia and Fiji are Vuvale—family—with a relationship grounded in trust, loyalty, understanding and respect,” he declared.

Australia’s posturing as a benevolent partner in the so-called “Pacific family” is a lie. For over a century, Australian and New Zealand imperialism have been responsible for appalling poverty and under-development throughout the region, while using Pacific Island workers as a source of cheap labour. The two regional powers are seeking to maintain their neocolonial dominance in their own “backyard.”

The Ocean of Peace commits Australia and Fiji to mutual obligations in the event of war. It asserts that an armed attack on either country “would be dangerous to each other’s peace and security” and that each “would act to meet the common danger, in accordance with its

domestic processes.”

While it is framed as “defensive,” the treaty creates the mechanism for pulling Fiji and the region into an aggressive war against China, which is being actively prepared by the US.

Rabuka said the agreement was a “very significant elevation” of the relationship. It was “a clear affirmation of Australia’s sustained commitment to the stability, resilience and prosperity of the Blue Pacific region at a time of global uncertainty,” he said. This is nothing more than joint adherence to the “international rules-based order” established by Washington after World War II to enforce its own hegemony around the globe.

The agreement contains a provision that allows Fiji and Australia to “invite any other Pacific state” to join the alliance. Rabuka declared that other Pacific leaders were waiting to join, telling journalists: “The more, the stronger, the better.”

That could include Papua New Guinea (PNG), which signed a treaty with Australia last October that came into force this month. The Pukpuk Treaty will allow up to 10,000 PNG citizens to join the Australian Defence Force.

Albanese hosted PNG’s prime minister James Marape in Brisbane on July 8 at the State of Origin rugby league final, as well as Samoa prime minister La’auli Leuatea Schmidt and Tonga’s Fatafehi Fakaf?nua—two more countries that could join the “Ocean of Peace” treaty.

The day before, Albanese concluded a visit to another Pacific country, the Solomon Islands, whose new prime minister Matthew Wale has pledged to strengthen ties with Australia and New Zealand. The US and Australia had reacted angrily to a security agreement signed by China with the Solomons in 2022 with condemnation and threats of military intervention. During his visit, Albanese issued hypocritical denunciations of China’s recent ballistic missile test in the Pacific.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon

welcomed the Australia-Fiji alliance and declared his government would formally explore joining it. He declared that NZ's military alliance with Australia "continues to go from strength to strength," and, considering existing ties with Fiji, "engaging with them on this alliance is logical."

NZ's opposition Labour Party leader Chris Hipkins also told the Bradbury Group podcast that the defence deal "made sense" because the Pacific should remain "a zone of peace" and NZ should consider signing up.

Luxon claimed that China's missile test had nothing to do with the treaty. However, he took a swipe at Beijing, saying the missile firing "goes against the spirit of how we want to have an ocean of peace in the Pacific. We don't want to see an increasing militarisation in the Pacific."

All these declarations about "peace" are a transparent fraud. Last October, defence ministers from Australia, Chile, France, NZ, PNG, Fiji and Tonga, with observers from Japan, the UK and the US attended the ministers' annual meeting in Chile. The agenda was devoted to developing "operational collaboration" between the region's militaries.

Last month the US-led biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise was held near Hawaii, the world's largest joint maritime drills, part of Washington's advanced preparations for war with China. There were 29 participating countries including Australia, NZ, Fiji, Tonga, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia and South Korea.

Fiji itself hosts regular multinational military exercises, mainly focusing on jungle warfare. With troops from the US, Australia, the UK and NZ, Exercise Cartwheel uses the Nausori Highlands and other locations annually to build "interoperability" between forces.

At Rabuka's instigation, last year's Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) summit in the Solomon Islands endorsed his so-called Ocean of Peace Declaration, purportedly committing the region to "peace, sovereignty, and climate justice." But almost all 18 PIF countries who signed the document have been making far-reaching security and military deals with imperialist powers.

Rabuka has been the key architect and promoter of the Ocean of Peace over the past two years. Significantly, in 2024, he entered talks with the US aimed at strengthening military ties with the US through a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to enable the Pentagon to station troops in Fiji, and pledged to "work closely" with the Trump administration. Fiji earlier signed similar SOFA

deals with both Canberra (2020) and Wellington (2023).

Rabuka underscored his government's pro-imperialist stance with the opening last September of Fiji's embassy in Jerusalem amid the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza. The open legitimisation of the Zionist regime followed Fiji leading half a dozen Pacific countries to vote in the UN against any resolutions, even non-binding, calling for a ceasefire or "humanitarian truce" in Gaza.

The Vuvale Union builds on a partnership signed in 2019 and upgraded in May this year. This designated security as a fundamental pillar, featuring enhanced maritime security, including Canberra's donation of a patrol boat, and the redevelopment of the Fiji Military's Blackrock Camp headquarters. It will now be backed by Australia committing \$A1 billion in aid over a decade, supposedly to combat transnational crime and to fund education, health and infrastructure.

China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning issued a frosty response to the Australia-Fiji treaty. "We do not engage in geopolitical rivalry or seek selfish political games," she said. She called on Australia to "truly respect the independence of Pacific island nations, focus on their sustainability, such as economic development, and avoid targeting any third party or harming the interest of any third party."

The US and its allies are pulling the Pacific region, which experienced some of the bloodiest battles of World War II, into their plans for an even more catastrophic war. The only way to stop this agenda is for workers and young people across the Pacific, including Australia and New Zealand, to join the fight to build an international anti-war movement based on socialist principles.



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