# Australian Labor pledges continued collaboration with Trump after midterm debacle

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The Australian Labor government has responded to the debacle suffered by US President Donald Trump and his Republican Party in last week's midterm election by declaring that it will continue to collaborate closely with the gangster in the White House, above all in the aggressive US-led war drive targeting China.

"I will work constructively with President Trump, that is what my job is," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared, setting the line that has been taken by the government as a whole.

As the WSWS has explained, the midterms expressed, within the anti-democratic framework of the US two-party system, a massive popular repudiation of Trump and his program of global militarism, authoritarianism and austerity dictated by the multi-billionaire oligarchy.

The Democrats captured both houses of Congress, gaining at least 39 House seats and seven Senate seats, while winning the national House popular vote by an estimated 13 percentage points—the second-largest margin in a midterm election since 1942.

The Democrats, reflecting their character as a ruthless party of big business, have declared that nothing will change and that they will facilitate the administration's ruthless spending cuts. The Democrats primary preoccupation is the continuation and deepening of the global war, through which American imperialism is seeking to offset its economic decline through the criminal use of military force.

The attitude of the Labor government, expressing the interests of the dominant sections of the Australian ruling class, parallels that of the Democrats. The Laborites always present the US-Australian military alliance as an expression of the "friendship" between the two peoples. Labor, however, has shown itself to be hostile to the popular sentiments expressed in the midterms.

Its concerns were most explicitly voiced by Defence Minister Richard Marles. Last Thursday, he declared: "The most important thing to say here is that our alliance with the United States remains at the forefront of our strategic policy." Labor, moreover, had "a very good working relationship" with Trump.

Over the weekend, Marles doubled down, telling the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that Labor were the "custodians of the alliance."

When the interviewer asked whether that attitude would persist, even if Trump began "talking about public executions" within the US again, or "seizing land held by other nations," Marles declared that the alliance would be "managed" "irrespective of whoever is in the White House."

The government's "job" was "to try and build the best possible relationship we can with the American government. And that's what we've been doing."

In the context of the interviewer's question, Marles response signalled a carte blanche. Labor will work with Trump, even if he establishes an open dictatorship. Labor, moreover, is not collaborating with Trump in spite of his program of global militarist reaction, but because of it.

Marles was oblique, but he referenced the "challenging strategic environment" and other phrases that are code for a US-led military build-up against China. Australian governments, Labor and Coalition alike, have collaborated with their US counterparts, Republican and Democratic for over 15 years in a region-wide military encirclement of China, which is viewed as the chief threat to US dominance.

Labor is pressing ahead with the AUKUS pact with the US and the UK, under which Australia is to acquire a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, clearly aimed at conducting operations against China. That too is the

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purpose of the vast expansion of the Australian military, centred on equipping every branch with long-range strike capabilities.

Labor has increased US basing arrangements in Australia to levels unprecedented since World War II. Data reported by the *Guardian* in September revealed that the US controls 17 military facilities in Australia and has access to another 75. Bases in the north are being upgraded, as a launching pad for US fighter-jets and bombers to conduct offensive operations throughout the Indo-Pacific, while the largest de facto US naval base adjacent to the Indian Ocean is being developed south of Perth in Western Australia.

The statements of Marles, Albanese and co. were a signal of full-steam ahead with those catastrophic military preparations, which they were indicating will proceed regardless of popular sentiment, election results or changes of government, in Australia or the US.

Australian imperialism, a mid-order power, has its own strategic and economic interests in the Asia Pacific. The stance of the Labor government reflects the fact that Australia has always relied on the dominant power of the day—first Britain, now the US—to be able to pursue those imperialist interests.

Albanese has cynically tied his declarations of support for Trump with claims that Australia has advocated "deescalation in the Middle East." Those comments had the character of an insurance policy, under conditions of widespread reports that Trump had been considering the resumption of a massive bombardment of Iran in the days immediately following the midterms.

In reality, the Labor government has been among the most directly involved of "western" US allies in the utterly criminal war. Albanese was one of the first world leaders to explicitly endorse the illegal US strikes on Iran on February 28, and subsequently committed troops, air-to-air missiles and an advanced command warplane to the Middle East to aid direct hostilities against Tehran.

The distancing act, under conditions where those assets appear to still be in the Middle East, points to the government's nervousness over mounting popular opposition.

Several leading Labor ministers referenced explosive anger over the soaring cost-of-living exacerbated by the Iran war, as a central factor in the outcome of the midterms. None of those comments touched upon or challenged the legitimacy of the war itself.

They recalled surprisingly candid comments by Foreign Minister Penny Wong two days before the midterms, which provided an insight into the concerns of Labor and the ruling elite over growing social opposition.

Speaking to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age*, Wong referred to the prospect of renewed strikes on Iran and made some mealy-mouthed statements of concern, before warning: "If you look at what's happening in France, Germany, Italy and a couple of other countries where we've already seen protests, the pressure on people's cost of living—the cost pressure of the inflation that's in the global economy—is manifesting not just in prices but also in social and economic instability."

The upheavals in Europe are of a potentially revolutionary character, with initial student protests raising issues of concern to the entire working class and posing the prospect of a direct confrontation with the big business governments of France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere.

Wong's comments underscored the fear of the government that the same conditions provoking those upheavals exist in Australia, including a soaring cost-of-living, the suppression of wages and the crisis-ridden character of essential public services.

Those conditions are already finding an initial political expression in an enormous crisis of the two-party system, with a collapse in support for both Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition.

The Labor government's program, expressing the interests of the ruling class amid capitalist crisis, of imperialist war abroad and a massive assault on the working class to pay for it will only deepen that anger, presaging major struggles by the working class.

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