

New Zealand PM reaffirms support for anti-China AUKUS military pact

Tom Peters
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During a visit to Australia last week, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon made clear his National Party-led government's commitment to strengthening military and intelligence ties with Canberra and Washington, as the US ramps up its threats against China and preparations for war.

In a speech to the Lowy Institute on August 15, Luxon noted that this was his third visit to Australia in less than a year and he was “deliberately deepening” relations with all the “Five Eyes partners.” This refers to the top-level US-led intelligence-sharing network, which includes Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand. The Waihopai spy base in New Zealand carries out global surveillance operations as part of the Five Eyes.

Luxon also reiterated that “we welcome AUKUS as an initiative to enhance regional security and stability.” The Australia-UK-US deal is aimed at transforming Australia into a base of operations for a future war against China. This includes stationing US troops in the north of the continent and supplying Australia with missiles and nuclear-powered attack submarines.

Luxon said: “New Zealand is exploring with the AUKUS partners how we could potentially participate in Pillar II, including to understand what this means for our focus on ensuring interoperability.” Pillar II of the AUKUS agreement, which involves greater sharing of military technology, is likely to include Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.

Most significantly, Luxon confirmed New Zealand's “commitment to the ANZUS Treaty, which formalises our alliance commitments to each other.” The ANZUS security alliance between Australia, New Zealand and the US, signed in 1951, while never formally revoked, was undermined during the 1980s when New Zealand's Labour Party government passed legislation

to ban nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed vessels from NZ waters.

The treaty is being elevated under conditions in which the US and its allies are at war against Russia over Ukraine, supporting Israel's genocide in Gaza, and recklessly militarising the Indo-Pacific region and stoking tensions with China. US imperialism is seeking to reverse its economic decline by using military might to establish complete dominance over Asia, the Middle East and the entire globe.

New Zealand's ruling class, a minor imperialist ally of the US, is determined to ensure that it is not left out. Luxon noted that New Zealand is assisting the US bombing of Houthi forces in Yemen in the name of “freedom of navigation.” In fact, this is being done to protect supply lines for the Israeli Defence Forces' genocidal war against the Palestinians.

“New Zealand is committed to remaining a credible and effective ally and partner,” Luxon declared. “Strengthening interoperability with our ally Australia will be a central principle of our capability decisions,” he added.

Wellington is preparing a new Defence Capability Plan which is expected to significantly boost military spending to upgrade navy ships, airforce planes and other hardware.

Asked to elaborate on why New Zealand has sent troops to Britain to train Ukrainian soldiers for the US-NATO war against Russia, Luxon said the contribution was important because “[another] Ukraine could happen in a flashpoint across our Indo-Pacific region as well.” He later told *Stuff* the “flashpoints” included the Taiwan Strait and North Korea—places where the US is seeking to provoke a war against China.

A joint statement by Luxon and Australian Labor Party Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on August 16

again referred to ANZUS. Both leaders agreed “a cyber-attack on either nation could constitute an armed attack under Article IV of the ANZUS Treaty.” This would trigger, according to the treaty, joint action “to meet the common danger.”

This follows provocative statements made earlier this year by the New Zealand government (as well as the US and Britain) accusing China of “hacking” parliamentary systems.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute applauded Luxon’s endorsement of AUKUS. The think tank’s senior analyst Euan Graham also noted that the Australian and New Zealand leaders had agreed to the “mutual embedding” of senior officers in the joint commands of each other’s armed forces. This “will make it easier for Australia and New Zealand to conduct military operations together, and is a sign of their willingness to integrate at a deeper level.”

New Zealand’s opposition Labour Party and its allies, the Greens and Te P?ti M?ori, have remained silent on Luxon’s and Albanese’s belligerent statements.

Labour has recently posed as an opponent of AUKUS. Earlier this month the party declared that the National-led government had not “made the case” for joining AUKUS Pillar II. Labour’s foreign affairs spokesman David Parker asked: “Why do [the government] think backing the United States in its competitive struggle against China is a good way to avoid war or protect New Zealand’s national interests?”

Former Labour Prime Minister Helen Clark posted on X: “Indeed NZ PM’s speech to Lowy Institute was hawkish. The ongoing invoking of #ANZUS suggests a nostalgia for the former weak US security guarantee to NZ, but against what?”

Clark linked to an article by University of Otago academic Geoffrey Miller, who warned that closer integration with Australia’s military “could put New Zealand on a collision course with China,” which is NZ’s major trading partner.

Clark and Parker speak for sections of the bourgeoisie who are nervous about openly siding with Washington and alienating Beijing. They are also concerned about the widespread anti-war sentiments in the New Zealand working class, as seen in the mass protests against the Gaza genocide.

Labour has differences over tactics and optics, but no real opposition to militarism and war. The Labour Party does not oppose the alliance with the US and Australia; Clark’s government strengthened the alliance by sending troops to the illegal US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The last Labour-led government sent troops to Britain to support the training of Ukrainian soldiers for the US-NATO war with Russia. It also kept troops in the Middle East and in Japan, supporting the encirclement of China and North Korea. When AUKUS was first announced, then-Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern welcomed it, and her government praised the growing US military presence in the Pacific.

In the event of a war against China, there is no question that Labour—and its allies, including the trade union bureaucracy—would stand with US imperialism, as the party has in every other major war.

The rush towards a catastrophic third world war must be stopped, but this will not be achieved through appeals to Labour or any other capitalist party. The anti-war movement must turn to the mobilisation of the international working class on the basis of a socialist program to put an end to capitalism itself, which is the source of war.



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