

Australia's Newly Elected Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese Rushed to Meet with Joe Biden in Tokyo After His Election Victory to Fortify Anti-Chinese Alliance

Australian Labor Party a pale shadow of what it was in the 1970s under Gough Whitlam—who was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup

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On May 21, Australians elected as their new prime minister Anthony Albanese of the Labor Party, who defeated conservative Scott Morrison. CNN reported that Australians had delivered a strong verdict on the need to act against climate change.

Unfortunately, there is no reason to believe that Anthony Albanese's government will be any different when it comes to foreign policy than Scott Morrison's.

Albanese has said explicitly that he is committed to AUKUS, the Australia-United Kingdom-United States strategic partnership against China.

During the election campaign, Albanese attacked the Morrison government for what he called a “massive foreign policy failure” vis-à-vis the Solomons/China agreement—a bilateral security cooperation agreement granting China access to the Solomon Islands' ports.

Albanese has further promised to create a training school in Australia to train the militaries from various Pacific nations.

During the election campaign, he and Morrison competed on who would be tougher toward China.



The last time that an Australian Labor government offered a markedly different foreign policy was the 1972-75 government led by Gough Whitlam—which was [overthrown in a CIA-backed coup](#).

Image on the right: Gough Whitlam in 1974. [Source: nma.gov.au]

Both Whitlam and Albanese had themselves sworn in as Prime Minister immediately after their respective election wins, but the contrast could not be starker.

Whereas Whitlam rejected alliances with imperialist powers, Albanese wanted to immediately scurry off to Tokyo to meet Joe Biden and reassure him of Australia's continued loyalty as a good and obedient servant.

The Australian Labor Party has not questioned the American alliance since Whitlam. Its current policies fit a long tradition in the Australasia region of whipping up alarm about "outsiders" muscling into "its backyard."

At the end of the Vietnam War, New Zealand's Prime Minister Rob Muldoon (1975-1984) used to commandeer prime time on the country's solitary TV network to issue dire warnings about the Soviet Union being able to move its Pacific Fleet thousands of kilometers south from Vladivostok to Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay and, hence, that much closer to "us." Didn't happen.

There were some beat-up stories about Soviet submarines in "our" Pacific. A few years later there was preposterous alarm about Gaddafi's Libya getting a toe hold in the Pacific. Nothing came of that, either.

Indeed, the only Pacific military power to attack New Zealand in the second half of the 20th century was not Russia or China or Vietnam. No, it was France, which bombed the *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland, killing one crew member, getting most of the killers out of the Pacific by submarine, and bullying NZ to release the two killers imprisoned here. That's right, the only actual violence—an act of terrorism, if not war—came from "our side" in the Pacific, one which maintains a considerable military presence in the Pacific to this day. Oh dear, how embarrassing. But let's not let the facts get in the way of a good story.



Source: [greenpeace.org](https://www.greenpeace.org)

Solomons: Same Old Yellow Peril Script

Now it is happening again, except that the villain in the script has changed. China has started throwing its weight around in the South China Sea, bullying neighbors like the Philippines (which calls it the West Philippines Sea). In 2022 China has been portrayed as suddenly leapfrogging so much closer to home (stop me if this sounds familiar) by signing a security agreement with the Solomon Islands. This has sent Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. into a frenzy about China getting a military base in the Solomons (despite the assurances of that country's prime minister that no such thing will happen).

Relations with China are a controversial subject within the Solomons, which established ties with China in 2019, leading to Taiwan severing diplomatic relations after decades. This did not go down well with one particular province, which wanted ties to continue with Taiwan and which has separatist yearnings. This all culminated in major riots in late 2021 in the Solomons' capital, Honiara—riots featuring people from that province and aimed at the city's Chinatown.

There was major property damage, the local cops couldn't handle it, and Australia and New Zealand sent police and troops (aided by Papua New Guinea and Fiji). This was the most recent iteration of the 2003-17 Australian and NZ security presence in the Solomons to deal with long-term and serious internal unrest. The regional assumption had always been—if the natives get restless, send in the soldiers and cops from the white countries because it is, after all, "our backyard."

But the 2022 China/Solomons security agreement puts a cat among those colonial pigeons. Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said that his government preferred that Chinese police take over that Australasian role of training the local cops and providing an on-the-ground security presence in the event of an emergency, including protecting Chinese citizens and assets (who were targeted in the 2021 riots). The white big boys were not taking this lying down—much spleen was vented by media, "experts" and politicians in Australia, NZ and the

U.S. The U.S. warned of a “response” if China built a base in the Solomons; Australia sent its two top spy chiefs to lean on Sogavare.

AUKUS

That had the entirely predictable result of getting his back up. “We find it very insulting to be branded as unfit to manage our sovereign affairs, or (to) have other motives in pursuing our national interests” (*ABC News*, March 29, 2022). Sogavare had the bad manners to remind Australia of its own deception when, in 2021, it broke a contract to buy French submarines and, instead, signed up with the U.S. and UK to form the AUKUS Treaty, which will build eight nuclear-powered (but not nuclear-armed) submarines for Australia.

Sogavare said the ‘Western media’ had accused Solomon Islands and China of showing a lack of transparency about the agreement. But Sogavare said he had first ‘learned of the AUKUS Treaty in the media.’ “One would expect that as a member of the Pacific family, Solomon Islands and members of the Pacific should have been consulted to ensure that this AUKUS Treaty is transparent, since it will affect the Pacific family by allowing nuclear submarines in Pacific waters,” Sogavare said.

“Oh, but I realise ... that Australia is a sovereign country, and that it can enter into any treaty that it wants to, transparently or not—which is exactly what they did with (the) AUKUS Treaty.” Sogavare added: “When Australia signed up to AUKUS we did not become theatrical and hysterical on the implications this would have for us. We respected Australia’s decision. And I’m glad to say that Australia, United States of America and Japan respected our sovereignty to enter into this security agreement with China as well, based on trust and mutual respect.”^[1]

Precisely. I couldn’t have put it better myself. Australia is the last country to be lecturing anyone about honesty and honorable behavior. Prime Minister Scott Morrison went behind the backs of the French in order to instead do a deal with the U.S. and UK. It led to the most extraordinary diplomatic bust up between those countries—France recalled its ambassadors from both Australia and the U.S. (it is America’s oldest ally, dating back to the American Revolution); President Macron called Morrison a “liar.” When Morrison was voted out a few months later, France’s outgoing foreign minister said: “I can’t stop myself from saying that the defeat of Morrison suits me very well.”

Nuclear-free New Zealand was not invited to join AUKUS (nor was fellow Five Eyes member Canada) but the Jacinda Ardern government has had a FOMO (fear of missing out) reaction and said that New Zealand would like to get involved with other aspects of AUKUS, such as artificial intelligence. AUKUS is rapidly proving it is about much more than a few nuclear subs: In April 2022 it announced that its three members would work together to develop hypersonic missiles to counter Russia and China, which already have them.

In early June, Jacinda Ardern met Joe Biden in the White House to strengthen the U.S./New Zealand relationship and to accept membership of Biden’s new Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity. Whilst at the White House, Ardern also met Kamala Harris, where one of the key topics discussed was U.S./New Zealand space cooperation, which revolves around the now U.S.-owned, New Zealand-founded company Rocket Lab, which launches payloads for the U.S. military and spy agencies from launch sites in both New Zealand and the U.S.

Drop the “Our Backyard” Colonial Crap

In a biting column in New Zealand’s *Stuff* magazine, Josie Pagani, a former Labor Party candidate in Rangitikei wrote:

“We are ‘gravely concerned’ about the Solomon Islands’ security deal with China. How about we offer something better. We say we’re worried because the Pacific is our own ‘backyard.’

The phrase is meant to signal a shared Pacific identity but, to the Pacific, the expression sounds colonial. Russia calls Ukraine its ‘backyard.’ If you are opposed to Russia meddling in Ukraine, where Russia spuriously claims a ‘security concern’ about Ukraine joining NATO, then consistency demands you must also respect the Solomons’ right to make its own decisions. We’re not invading the country—but we are trying to boss it around.

We didn’t like it when the Five Eyes intelligence network demanded we sign its statement condemning China for human rights abuses. Since the network attacked our independence from China for refusing to sign, our diplomatic ties to the U.S. and Australia have weakened, not strengthened. Likewise, our public condemnation of the Solomons’ deal with China will push the Solomons further away, not bring it closer...We would be more effective if we asked why the Solomons would do a security deal with China in the first place.

If we listened, it would be clear that what’s important to Solomon Islands is security, not geopolitics. Recent riots in Honiara were about jobs. Too many unemployed young people with nothing to do, sick of watching imported Chinese workers get the jobs. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force couldn’t cope, despite support from New Zealand and Australian police. So, the Government turned to China.

Security matters in the Pacific. Transnational crime, such as drug production and people trafficking, is serious in the region. Trafficking of methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine is on the rise. Why doesn’t New Zealand double its aid to the Solomons to grow new businesses, and more jobs in legitimate industries? Why not help the country negotiate better contracts with China that insist on local labour instead of shipping in Chinese workers? We need to out-compete China. Not just yell ‘Get Off My Lawn’ at them.”^[2]

Foreign Bases and Wars: The U.S. Is the Undisputed Champ

The hypocrisy of Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. is quite breathtaking. I am not going to argue any case for China to have a base in the Solomons, or anywhere else in the Pacific for that matter. The Pacific should be true to its name and be pacific, with no foreign bases.

But let’s do some basic fact-checking—China has one foreign military base in the world (in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa). The U.S. has nearly 800 bases in 70 foreign countries and territories (including Djibouti).

The Pacific is full of U.S. bases, from South Korea and Japan to Australia, which, for example, hosts U.S. Marines in Darwin and the vital war-fighting spy base at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs. That is not counting the bases on U.S. Pacific soil like Hawaii, Guam, and California.

It no longer has bases in the Philippines but has the run of the place.



Map of U.S. military bases. [Source: womenagainstmilitarymadness.org]

Australia is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to upgrade Papua New Guinea’s main Navy base on Manus Island, which will then be used by the Australian and U.S. navies.



Source: usni.org

On Anzac Day 2022 Australia's then-Defense Minister, Peter Dutton, said, "The only way you can preserve peace is to prepare for war, and be strong as a country. Not to cower, not to be on bended knee and be weak. That's the reality."

Dutton, who has since replaced Scott Morrison as leader of the Liberal Party, continued: "The Chinese, through their actions, through their words, are on a very deliberate course at the moment, and we have to stand up with countries to stare down any act of aggression...to make sure we can keep peace in our region and for our country."^[3]

How's that for Warmongering 101?

I haven't mentioned actual wars, because it is such a blindingly obvious fact. The U.S. has been involved in wars continuously in the 21st century (Iraq and Afghanistan being only the most spectacular examples). That carries on an unbroken tradition dating back to World War II, when it succeeded Britain as the world's pre-eminent white, Western empire.

And how many wars has China fought in the 21st century? I can only think of a few deadly fisticuffs on the contested border with India. In the 20th century, it fought wars in Korea and Vietnam and subjugated Tibet. The Chinese security apparatus is used for internal repression in places from Hong Kong to Xinjiang. The U.S. security apparatus is, likewise, used for internal repression across the whole country. Ask any young Black male motorist.

What's Good for the Goose Is Good for the Gander

Let's look at a comparative example much closer to home. In 2011 Christchurch was flattened by a killer earthquake, one of a sequence of 18,000 that shook the city for years. In the immediate aftermath of that killer quake, hundreds of Australian cops were flown to Christchurch and patrolled the streets (minus their usual guns) for weeks. It was the first deployment of Aussie cops to NZ in the history of the two countries.

It was a huge emergency and my stricken home town needed as much help as it could get (there was also a huge NZ military mobilization, with help from the militaries of other countries, such as Australia and Singapore). It was a disaster on a global scale and NZ exercised its sovereign right to ask its friends for help, for which we were truly grateful. It was all hands to the pump.

Now, imagine if China, or the Solomons for that matter, had objected to NZ inviting Australian cops to help in our emergency. They would have been told to mind their own bloody business. We could have justifiably called such a response "hysterical and hypocritical." What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

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Notes

1. Daniel Hurst, "Solomon Islands PM suggests Australia's reaction to China security deal is hysterical and hypocritical," *The Guardian*, April 29, 2022.

2. Josie Pagani, "Stop Telling Pacific Countries What to Do," *Stuff*, January 4, 2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128224030/stop-telling-pacific-countries-what-to-do>.
3. Angus Thompson, "Reality of Our Time: Dutton Warns Australians to Prepare for War," *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 25, 2022, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/reality-of-our-time-dutton-warns-australians-to-prepare-for-war-20220425-p5afuy.html>).

Featured image: Anthony Albanese of the Australian Labor Party celebrates election victory. [Source: scmp.com]

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