

From the RAA to JAUKUS?

Contemporary Japan-Australia Relations

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Introduction

In foreign policy analysis (FPA) theory, one aspect of the poliheuristic approach considers how changes of government may affect the extent of continuity and change in a country's foreign policy (Alden & Aran, 2012 : 28). In Australia, there has traditionally been a bipartisan approach towards foreign policy held by the major political parties, the conservative Liberal-National Party (LNP) Coalition, and the social-democratic Australian Labor Party (ALP). Cleavages have historically emerged over major crises and conflicts, such as Australian participation in the U.S.-led wars in Vietnam and Iraq; relations with Japan, however, have long been one of the areas of bipartisan consensus.

This has proved to remain the case following the national federal election on May 21, 2022, which saw the defeat of the LNP after nine years in power, and the ascendancy of the new Labor government, led by Antony Albanese. Prime Minister Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong visited Tokyo for the Quad leaders' summit on the day they were sworn into office, demonstrating the ongoing importance of relations between Japan and Australia.

This contribution will first examine the diplomatic process which led to the 2020 Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) security treaty, and then the possible implications of the 2021 AUKUS pact will be considered. It will then demonstrate the continuity in Japan-Australia relations in the transition from the LNP to Labor governments following the 2022 election, and analyse how the security relationship particularly continues to deepen, driven by the imperatives of regional geopolitical rivalries.

Emergence of the Japan-Australia Security Relationship

As Australia's oldest political party, founded in 1891, the ALP's foreign policy position on relations with Japan shifted along with the dramatic historical events of the 20th

century. The Fisher and Hughes Labor governments found Australia, as a dominion of the British Empire, allied to Imperial Japan during the 1914-1918 Great War (Guoqi, 2017 : 180) ; the Curtin Labor government led the national resistance to the threat of attack and invasion by Imperial Japanese forces during the Second World War (Burke, 2008 : 73-75). From opposition, Labor gave bipartisan support to the 1957 Trade Treaty, and 1976 Friendship Treaty. Back in power, the Hawke Labor government co-founded APEC with Japan in 1989, and commenced cooperation between the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) and the Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF) in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs), first in Cambodia in 1992, and then in Timor Leste from 2000 (Mark, 2018 : 94, 96-97).

The next major development in multilateral security cooperation was the formation of the 2002 Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) between Japan and Australia, and their mutual military ally the U.S., under the Howard LNP government, with meetings first held between civil service officials, and then foreign ministers from 2006 (Tow, 2015 : 27-28). This followed the onset of the 'War on Terror', after Al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks on the USA on September 11, 2001. The ADF joined the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban regime on 2001, beginning a 20-year involvement in an ultimately unsuccessful war ; the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) government of prime minister Koizumi Junichiro would authorise the SDF to provide indirect logistic support. The SDF and ADF would then operate together in a stabilization mission in southern Iraq, between 2005 and 2007, following the U.S. invasion in 2003 (Hatakeyama, 2018 : 158-159).

This participation in a potentially hazardous environment together provided the impetus for the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC), agreed in March 2007 between the LDP government of prime minister Abe Shinzo and the Howard government (which was soon after to lose the November 24 election to Labor) . The JDSC became the basis for the steadily increasing bilateral security cooperation between Australia and Japan which continues to the present day (MoFA, 2007) . The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue also had its first manifestation under the Howard and Koizumi governments in 2004, which included participation in the Malabar naval exercises held in the Indian Ocean. However, the Quad was discontinued by the Rudd Labor government in 2008, following the reticence of the Bush Administration, which desired to avoid antagonising China (Flitton, 2020) .

The Rudd government nevertheless remained committed to the Japan-Australia

security relationship, which was quickly expressed by the first participation of the MSDF in Australia's biennial *Kakadu* naval exercises in 2008. The Japan-Australia Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement (ACSA) was quickly negotiated and concluded in May 2010 with the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government, which allowed mutual supply and servicing between the ADF and SDF for defence activities ranging from training to PKOs (MoD, 2012 : 328-330). This was only the second ACSA for Japan with another country after that with the U.S.; the 2010 annual white paper from the Japanese Ministry of Defense (MoD) thus listed Australia at the top of the countries with which Japan aims to strengthen its bilateral security relations (Ishihara, 2014 : 95). The requirement for ACSA was soon tragically apparent when the ADF provided emergency humanitarian relief and rescue assistance after the Tohoku disaster of March 11, 2011. Prime Minister Julia Gillard was the first foreign leader to visit Japan after the disaster, pledging reconstruction support, particularly security of energy supply (Terada, 2013 : 131) .

The Japan-Australia Information Security Agreement (ISA) was then signed in May 2012, and came into force along with ACSA in March 2013 under the second LNP Abe government, indicating how the intelligence services of Australia and Japan were also deepening their cooperation (MoFA, 2013). The Ground SDF then commenced participation for the first time in the *Southern Jackaroo* ground military exercises held in Australia in May 2013, with the ADF and U.S. forces, in one of the first demonstrations of the 'Pacific Pivot' announced by the Obama administration in 2011 (DoD, 2013). Despite the internal political instability that eventually led to Labor's defeat in the election on September 7, 2013, the Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Labor governments had proved a dedicated commitment to Australia's relations with Japan in both diplomatic and practical action (Carr, 2014 : 226) .

The next LNP government continued to build on this momentum, as the deeply conservative prime minister Tony Abbott was far more ideologically aligned with prime minister Abe. In a historic visit to Australia in July 2014, which included an address by Abe to the Australian parliament, the first by a Japanese prime minister, Abe and Abbott signed the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) , which promised a schedule to remove most remaining tariffs, as well as the Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology (Mark, 2014) . A Special Strategic Partnership (SSP) was thus declared, raising the level of security cooperation to just below that of a military alliance (MoFA, 2014).

Towards the RAA

Concluding the SSP led to commencement of negotiations for a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), to permit the SDF and ADF to use each other's bases, facilities, and support structures, akin to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the U.S. This higher level of integrated operational capability will thus allow ADF units to be stationed in Japan, and the SDF in Australia. Progress towards the RAA was greatly enabled by the collective self-defence bills passed in 2015 by the Abe government, which allowed the SDF to come to the assistance of friendly countries, particularly its ally the U.S., but also potentially Australia (Mark, 2016 : 99-114).

The upgraded level of security cooperation was reflected in the first participation by the SDF in July 2015 in the ADF's biennial *Talisman Sabre* combined high-intensity warfare exercises, held with U.S. forces (Graham, 2015). Meanwhile Japan and Australia made intense diplomatic efforts together to preserve the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) signed in February 2016, particularly after the Trump administration withdrew the U.S. from the multilateral trade treaty in January 2017 (Baker, 2017). ACSA was also upgraded in 2017, to allow mutual supply of munitions (Hughes, 2022 : 65). Concerned by the potential for the erratic, isolationist Donald Trump to damage alliances, at the November 2017 ASEAN Summit in Manila, prime ministers Abe, Malcolm Turnbull and Narendra Modi were able to persuade Trump to revive the Quad (Turnbull, 2020 : 450). This led to five Quad foreign ministers' meetings by 2019, and three leaders' summits, in March and September 2021, and March 2022 (Cabinet Public Affairs Office, 2022).

From 2018, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and Royal Australian Navy (RAN) have rotated aircraft and warships from SDF bases in Japan to participate in *Operation ARGOS*, to enforce UN-authorised sanctions against North Korea, along with allies including the U.S., the United Kingdom (UK), and Canada (DoD, 2022a). In 2019, the RAAF participated in its first joint air combat training exercises with the ASDF, *Bushido Guardian*, in Hokkaido (Trimble, 2019). Despite this increasing cooperation, negotiations for the RAA dragged out for six years.

The major sticking point was the potential application of the death penalty to ADF personnel, if they committed capital crimes while off duty in Japan. There was considerable resistance from the Australian government to concluding the RAA, unless ADF members could be exempted from the death penalty (Sato & Abel, 2020). The

position of the Japanese government ultimately prevailed, as the RAA was concluded without this awkward issue being decisively resolved, with only a commitment from both sides to address such issues on a case-by-case basis (Rothwell, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and the erratic unreliability of the Trump administration had contributed to a sense of heightened instability in international politics, which encouraged settlement of the RAA.

Despite such misgivings, on November 18, 2020, LNP prime minister Scott Morrison made his first overseas visit after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to finally conclude the RAA formally in person. Morrison was the first foreign leader to meet prime minister Suga Yoshihide, who had succeeded Abe, in Japan (Mark, 2020). Ratification of the RAA by Japan should proceed smoothly, given the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's majority in both houses of the Diet. However, the opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ) and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) are still likely to raise concerns over whether the RAA undermines the pacifist ideals of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution (Narazaki & Yokoyama, 2022). By contrast, Labor unreservedly gave its bipartisan support to the RAA, as part of its pre-election foreign policy platform (ALP, 2021 : 77) .

The RAA has become a model for Japan to build its defence ties with other countries, as negotiations are already under way for similar agreements with the UK ; France, Germany, and Canada could follow (Koga, 2022) . The Japan-Australia RAA is therefore one of the most significant bilateral security agreements in contemporary Japanese diplomacy. It enables the expansion of potential collective self defence operations by the SDF to a multilateral range of countries beyond the long-running security relationship with the U.S., although the U.S. Forces in Japan (USFJ) of course remains the primary partner of the SDF (Wilkins, 2022) . In November 2021, the Defense Ministry invoked the collective self-defence laws to allow the MSDF to protect an RAN frigate during training drills off Shikoku, the first time such protection had been granted to military assets of another country apart from the U.S. (Kyodo News, 2022a).

The AUKUS Surprise

Steadily deteriorating relations with China accelerated after Morrison demanded an international tribunal to investigate the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic ; the Chinese government retaliated with an escalation of tariffs and quotas against Australian exports, and increasingly harsh diplomatic rhetoric (Walker, 2020). The Morrison government's

2020 Defence Strategic Update and Force Structure Plan policy documents outlined planned increases to the long-range strike capabilities of the ADF, including long-range missiles, in order to counter the rising strategic challenge of China's steadily increasing military power (DoD, 2020). In April 2021, the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI), a trilateral agreement between Japan, Australia and India was concluded, which aimed to reduce mutual dependence on Chinese exports, particularly through Japanese and Australian investment in Indian manufacturing (METI, 2021) .

A long-running ambition to upgrade Australia's deterrence capability was to replace the RAN's *Collins*-class conventionally-powered submarines, in service since the 1990s. Japan had been disappointed when an expected tender for the next generation of Australian submarines was instead granted to France by the Turnbull LNP government in 2016 (Turnbull, 2020 : 339-341) . It was even a more profound surprise when following secret consultations by the following Morrison LNP government, AUKUS was announced in a joint declaration by Australia, the UK and the U.S. on September 15, cancelling the contract with France. The central part of the agreement was for the UK and U.S. to assist Australia in developing nuclear-powered submarines, a truly far-reaching and radical initiative, as this would be the first time a country not armed with nuclear weapons would come to operate nuclear-powered vessels. This would also be the first time for the U.S. and UK to extend their mutually shared defence-related nuclear technology outside the 1958 U.S.-UK Mutual Defence Agreement. Increased cooperation between the three countries would also proceed in areas of cybersecurity, such as artificial intelligence and quantum technology (White House, 2021) .

Replacing the conventional submarines was justified as giving the RAN greater operational flexibility, as nuclear-powered boats travel at faster speeds, and have far longer time on station. Having a fleet of at least eight nuclear-powered boats would grant far greater range and endurance, and hence potential striking power, which would enhance deterrence. While the rise of China's strategic power in the region was not overtly mentioned, it was obvious that deterring the People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) in the East China Sea was the purpose of the pact (Curran, 2021) . AUKUS was swiftly condemned by China; its state media and foreign ministry accused the three allied member states of pursuing an 'obsolete Cold War mentality', which had now turned Australia into 'an adversary of China' (BBC, 2021). China has since criticised the provisional approval for AUKUS by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), despite increasing its own nuclear arsenal, including expansion of its fleet of nuclear

powered and nuclear armed submarines (Dziedzic, 2022).

Constructing nuclear-powered submarines will delay the delivery of the next generation of RAN submarines even further, into the 2040s at least : this will require the *Collins* boats to have their service life extended yet again, to reach around fifty years, with the refit expense estimated at twice their original cost (Hellyer, 2021). The cost of building eight nuclear submarines in Australia has been estimated to potentially blow out to over A\$170 billion, nearly twice the original cost of the French tender. A consultation process to decide on either UK or U.S.-designed submarines, with intent for construction in Australia, was due to be finalised by March 2023 (Bruni & Tyrrell, 2022). RAN sailors are already being trained by the Royal Navy, and shortages in procurement of *Virginia*-class submarines for the U.S. Navy indicates that a UK model may have to be selected, unless Australian governments are willing to wait for the next generation of American *SSN (X)*-class submarines, or even for a unique hybrid design (Greene, 2022a).

The AUKUS decision showed that under the LNP government, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) had become largely sidelined in Australia's foreign policy processes. The National Security Committee (NSC) of cabinet, with Morrison at its head, dominated Australia's strategic direction, as the traditional expertise and opinion of the diplomatic corps was bypassed, leaving them surprised and dramatically isolated by the AUKUS decision (Barnes, 2022). Apart from Morrison and a few key officials in the Department of Defence, most of the defence and foreign policy establishment had been deliberately kept ignorant about the preparation of AUKUS : this tendency of Morrison's for secrecy would only be fully revealed after the election (Tingle, 2022).

At the Rome G20 Summit in November 2021, after an awkward brief meeting with Morrison, French President Emmanuel Macron was asked by Australian media if he thought he was lied to by Morrison over the contract's cancellation; Macron replied sharply, "I don't think, I know!" After this accusation, Morrison claimed the French contract had been abandoned due to problems with delays, content, and cost blowouts, which directly contradicted his government's stated position in September (Fathi, 2021). France officially downgraded Australia in its next Indo-Pacific Strategy white paper, removing it from the list of strategic partners, with security cooperation to occur only on a case-by-case basis (MEFA, 2022 : 41) .

The 2022 Election

AUKUS was part of the Morrison LNP government's attempt to project an image of strength during an election year, backed up by announcements in the pre-election 2022 budget of record defence spending. Clumsy attempts by the LNP to wedge the opposition as weak on confronting China during the election campaign were effectively countered by Labor's generally bipartisan position on foreign and defence policy (Whiteman, 2022). Labor Party leader Anthony Albanese and shadow foreign affairs minister Senator Penny Wong quickly and clearly stated their support for AUKUS, while criticising the diplomatically disruptive way it was brought about (Wong, 2021).

The move to acquire nuclear-powered submarines was part of another historic announcement of a massive expansion of the ADF planned by the Morrison government, as part of its pre-election positioning to boost its national security image. It will be the largest expansion of the ADF since the Vietnam War, aiming to add over 18,000 personnel across the three services (including the highly-trained submariners and nuclear-qualified support personnel that will be required to crew and service the future submarines), to around 80,000. The upgrade will include new units dedicated to cyber warfare, as part of the AUKUS agreement, and long-range missiles (Greene, 2022b).

These plans were confirmed in the pre-election 2022 budget delivered on March 29, which announced an increased cybersecurity program (termed REDSPICE), costing nearly \$10 billion over the next ten years (although most of this spending will be redirected from already allocated funding) . This will see the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) double in size; the budget did not offer any further details on nuclear submarine acquisition though (Haskell-Dowland, 2022). In response, in his pre-election campaign foreign policy speech, Opposition Leader Albanese committed Labor to matching, and possibly exceeding the LNP's plans for higher defense spending, with suggestions of higher numbers for warship construction, and plans to equip the AUKUS-provided submarines with U.S.-supplied Tomahawk cruise missiles (Albanese, 2022). Meanwhile, Senator Wong indicated a diplomatic improvement of relations with China would be possible under Labor, if the LNP could only abandon partisan attempts to manipulate national security and foreign policy issues for political gain (Murphy & Hurst, 2022). The bipartisan support for maintaining strong relations with Japan meant this was not an election campaign issue.

Once the election campaign was finally called by Morrison on April 10, to be held on May 21, the major issues were economic management of decades-high inflation and cost of living pressures, provision of health care and social services, and dealing with climate change (Baker, 2022). Labor gave prominence to controversies over Morrison's character, including the duplicity around AUKUS, along with allegations of 'pork-barrel' spending to corruptly favour marginal electorates, failure to implement a long-promised National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), and the LNP's lack of action on climate change. In response, the LNP and Morrison sought to target Albanese as inauthentic and inexperienced (Murphy & Butler, 2022).

Hence, Labor continually endorsed the AUKUS agreement, but criticised the means through which it was achieved. The deception perpetrated on the French government by the AUKUS deal was yet another incremental incident which contributed to the overall poor perception of the LNP government, and so contributed to its defeat on May 21, 2022. Labor won nine seats, to gain a two-seat majority of 77 seats in the lower House of Representatives; the LNP lost 19 seats, falling to 58, with an expanded crossbench of 16, comprising four Greens, two from other minor parties, and 10 Independents, including seven 'Teals', who won inner-urban seats from the Liberal Party's traditional heartland (AEC, 2022). The LNP lost four seats in the Senate, falling to 32, while Labor retained 26 seats. The crossbenchers increased by six to 18 seats, dominated by 12 Greens (Parliament of Australia, 2022). This means the Senate is now progressively aligned, as Labor requires support of the Greens plus one other Senator to pass legislation.

The Albanese Labor Government, the Quad, and IPEF

The leader of the ALP since its defeat in the 2019 election, Albanese had previously served as Minister for Infrastructure and Transport in the Cabinet of the Rudd and Gillard governments, serving briefly as Deputy Prime Minister in 2013 (Middleton, 2016 : 412-416). Like many of his predecessors, as a new prime minister, Albanese found himself suddenly thrust onto the world stage with a paucity of experience in foreign affairs. The new Labor government immediately showed its commitment to retaining strong relations with Japan, when Albanese and Foreign Minister Wong left for the fourth Quad leaders' summit in Tokyo on May 23, a mere three hours after they were hurriedly sworn into their offices by the Governor-General. At the summit, Albanese recommitted Australia's support for the free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), opposing any use of force to change the status quo of the liberal rules-based order. A plan to increase the level of maritime

surveillance in the region by Quad members was one of the practical measures announced to uphold the FOIP; China was the unstated, but obvious target for such deterrence. Albanese also announced Australia would host the next Quad leaders' summit in 2023 (Prime Minister of Australia, 2022a).

In the bilateral Japan-Australia Leaders Meeting held between the two prime ministers, Albanese reassured that Australia's foreign policy had 'not fundamentally changed' with his new government. He also expected defense and security cooperation with Japan to increase, as both leaders expressed concerns about an increasingly assertive China, including its diplomatic incursions into South Pacific, and condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Prime Minister Kishida Fumio stated that Japan supported the establishment of AUKUS, but there were no plans to join. Both leaders agreed to expedite ratification of the RAA, and begin efforts towards renewal of the JDSC (Kyodo, 2022b).

While Albanese was not in time to attend its launch in person, Australia also was one of 13 countries to join the first summit of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). This initiative of President Joe Biden will attempt a regional framework to counter China's attempt at geo-economic hegemony, with the strategic aim of promoting greater supply chain resilience, digital technology, and renewable energy (The White House, 2022a). There were no specific trade advantages announced with IPEF though, such as tariff reductions or privileged market access, so doubts remain about its practical purpose, beyond implicit anti-Chinese symbolism. Australia and Japan still hope the U.S. may return to the CPTPP, but the Biden administration has so far not expressed any intention to do so (Tanaka, 2022). A meeting of 14 IPEF trade ministers has already sought to engage in negotiations on digital trade and supply chains, but India has again declined to participate, echoing its decision in November 2019 to withdraw from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) multilateral trade agreement (Masuda & Kobayashi, 2022).

The ascension of highly-respected Senator Wong as Foreign Minister was a signal that DFAT would return to greater prominence in the foreign policy process, reversing the trend of being defunded, and sidelined by the NSC, under the previous LNP government. Increasing DFAT's budget had been one of Labor's election campaign pledges, but the decision of deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles to take the Defence portfolio nevertheless showed Labor simultaneously retained a strong commitment to

maintaining and increasing the size, capabilities, and status of the ADF. Strong support for the U.S. alliance to deter China thus remained at the core of Australian strategic policy (McDonald, 2022). Marles was next to visit Tokyo in June, and emphasised the closer security ties which would develop under the RAA, to encourage greater cooperation and more training between the ADF and SDF, to deepen interoperability (MoD, 2022a). This occurred immediately, when senior officers from the ADF were one of 16 military forces represented at the Pacific Amphibious Leaders Symposium (PALS) hosted by Japan in June (Asahi Shimbun, 2022).

This foreign policy approach shared by Japan and Australia of utilizing multilateral institutions was next clearly seen when Albanese and Kishida were invited to attend the NATO summit held in Madrid at the end of June (after which Albanese visited Paris to restore relations with Macron), and participated in a sideline summit hosted by Kishida, the Asia-Pacific Four (AP4), with South Korea and New Zealand (MoFA, 2022a). This ‘minilateralism’ showed the potential for cautious improvement in the bilateral relations between Japan and South Korea, after the May election of the Yoon administration. This diplomatic encouragement from mutual partners like Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. is therefore hoped to help overcome the severe strain on relations endured during the previous Moon administration, over historical issues (Nishino, 2022).

The objective of closer interoperability between the ADF and SDF was further emphasised in Marles’ first visit as deputy prime minister to the U.S. in July, accompanied by the chiefs of Australia’s major intelligence agencies – the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO), the ASD, and the Office of National Intelligence (ONI). His speech delivered to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) stated the aim of Australian defence policy was to pursue ‘interchangeability’ with its allies, particularly in maritime security, such as anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and in missile proliferation, in preparation for potential high-intensity conflict in the region (CSIS, 2022a).

This essentially continued the policy direction of the previous LNP government under former defence minister Peter Dutton (now Opposition Leader). This has been a major shift in Australian strategic policy, from continental defence in the 1980s, and then expeditionary coalition warfare during the ‘War on Terror’. Labor supported the withdrawal of the ADF from Afghanistan in 2021, made inevitable by the U.S. abandonment of the Afghan government, which led to the rapid victory of the Taliban.

The Albanese government has so far quietly maintained the ADF's advisory mission in Iraq, *Operation OKRA*, to counter the lingering terrorist insurgency of Islamic State (Daesh) (DoD, 2022b), and is set to continue to raise real defence spending to record levels (RMIT, 2022).

Pacific Challenges

Further multilateral defence cooperation with key ASEAN states occurred in August, when the SDF, ADF and Singaporean armed forces joined the U.S.-Indonesia *Super Garuda Shield 2022* exercises in Indonesia for the first time (Robson, 2022). The ASDF sent aircraft to the biannual multinational *Pitch Black 2022* air combat exercises in Australia held the same month, also joined for the first time by the South Korean Air Force, and the German *Luftwaffe* (DoD, 2022c). The heightened level of diplomatic and military cooperation between Japan and Australia with ASEAN and the South Pacific, was clearly aimed to counter China's own geo-economic and diplomatic incursions. This was dramatically shown just before the Australian election, when a security agreement was signed between the Solomon Islands and China in April (MOFAPRC, 2022). The agreement would allow China to send police, and possibly military forces, to assist in providing domestic security, protect Chinese investments, and most concerning, potentially suppress political opposition (Stoakes, 2022).

This has raised the possibility of China potentially constructing port facilities and airstrips, which could provide the infrastructure for PLA warships and aircraft to operate in the South Pacific about two thousand kilometres from the Australian mainland. This alarmed the Australian security establishment, and Labor sharply criticised the previous Morrison LNP government and its 'Pacific Step-up' Official Development Assistance (ODA) program for being too lacklustre, and implicitly disparaged Australia's intelligence agencies, for also not taking action to prevent such an extensive encroachment by China (Canetti, 2022).

The Albanese government sought to rectify these failings by pledging to upgrade the delivery of *Guardian*-class patrol boats to Pacific Island Forum (PIF) countries, with 15 boats delivered so far. The process has been delayed by refurbishments required to correct design faults, raising the cost of the A\$2.1 billion Pacific Maritime Security Program (DoD, 2022d). Another key Labor promise is the establishment of the Australia Pacific Defence School, a dedicated training facility based in Australia to upgrade the

defense and security forces of PIF countries (Needham, 2022). Japan was therefore in supportive collaboration with the new Labor government by increasing diplomatic efforts to counter rising Chinese influence in Pacific. Soon after their trip to Tokyo, Albanese and Wong joined New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern at the PIF Fiji summit in June. This led to a new grouping, Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP), formed by Australia, the U.S., Japan, New Zealand, and the UK, with the aim of improving diplomatic and economic ties to Pacific Island states (The White House, 2022b).

Japan stepped up into this role, when a destroyer was deployed in August for the first joint exercise of the MSDF with the Solomon Islands maritime police and U.S. Navy (Kyodo News, 2022c). The SDF was also present for ceremonial representation in the memorial service for the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal (Mainichi, 2022a). However, in another sign of deepening alignment with China, the Sogovare government of the Solomon Islands then prohibited all foreign military vessels docking in its ports, which barred access to a U.S. Coast Guard cutter and Royal Navy patrol boat. Vessels from Australia and New Zealand remained exempt from the ban, however (ABC News, 2022).

To pre-empt further Chinese geo-economic encroachment, at the end of August, foreign minister Wong embarked on visits to Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Timor Leste. New PNG Minister for Foreign Affairs Justin Tkatchenko indicated a desire to pursue a new security agreement with Australia and New Zealand. This would supplement the upgrade already being undertaken by the U.S. and Australia to the PNG's naval base on Manus Island (O'Keefe, 2022). Meeting with President of Timor Leste Jose Ramos-Horta, Wong encouraged that a negotiated settlement be reached in the long-running dispute with Australian energy company Woodside (in a consortium involving Osaka Gas), over exploitation of the Greater Sunrise gas field project. Wong also subtly warned Ramos-Horta against becoming indebted to China, if Timor Leste succumbed to investment from Chinese companies (Dziedzic, 2022).

In a further diplomatic success for Wong, only a week later, Ramos-Horta definitively ruled out the PLA ever establishing military bases in Timor Leste, as a new Defence Cooperation Agreement was signed with Australia. Chinese investment in infrastructure projects would remain welcome though, including gas development (Lyons & Ferguson, 2022). The Biden Administration has since buttressed these local diplomatic efforts by Australia and Japan, by hosting the first U.S.-Pacific Island Country summit, held in Washington D.C. on September 28-29, to promote sustainable development, security,

and to counter China's influence, although the Solomon Islands still displayed some recalcitrance (Kine, 2022).

Confronting China

Relations between Australia and China, its largest trading partner and export market, had been in a steady stage of deterioration, particularly since the Turnbull LNP government passed sweeping anti-espionage legislation in 2018 : it did not specifically mention China, but was implicitly aimed at countering suspected Chinese interference in Australia's domestic politics (Parliament of Australia, 2018). Along with the diplomatic rifts of the coronavirus pandemic, tariff disputes, and then AUKUS, air and sea confrontations between the PLA and ADF in the East and South China Sea continued to occur, as the RAAF and RAN carried out freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS), also long conducted by the U.S. and Japan, in disputed waters claimed by China as its territory, but not recognised by any other states (Rothwell, 2022). Potentially hazardous confrontations between the PLA and ADF further contributed to rising tensions in 2022. In February, a PLA warship transiting the Torres Strait targeted a RAAF P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, conducting routine surveillance with a targeting laser (Graham, 2022). To test the reaction of the new Labor government, another RAAF P-8 patrolling out of Clark Air Base in the Philippines into the South China Sea in May had its engine damaged, when chaff was released into its flight path by a PLA J-16 fighter jet. This action was roundly condemned as 'very dangerous' by defence minister Marles (Ramzy, 2022).

Despite these tensions, the Labor government still managed to hold the first ministerial-level meetings between Australia and China in over two years, when Marles met his counterpart, Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe, at the Shangri La dialogue in Singapore in June. This showed the potential for a possible thawing in Australia-China relations, following Japan's example of being able to maintain fairly stable relations with China, also its largest trading partner, despite near-daily incursions by Chinese coast guard and/or military aircraft and vessels into Japanese territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands (claimed by China and Taiwan as the Daioyu Islands) (Bisley, 2022). Further military-based diplomacy was displayed in the 24th annual Indo-Pacific Chiefs of Defense conference held in Sydney on July 25-28. It featured 27 regional defence chiefs, including SDF Chief of Staff General Yamazaki Koji, and U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley (USINDOPACOM, 2022), who accused China of increasing

its aggressive posture in the region, but denied China's accusations that the U.S. was seeking a new Cold War, or an 'Asian NATO' (Mainichi, 2022b).

At the end of July, the Japanese foreign and economic ministers were in Washington for the first Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee Meeting (Economic '2+2' summit) between Japan and the U.S. on economic security, with particular focus on supply chains and technology, especially semiconductors. Foreign minister Hayashi Yoshimasa pledged a further increase of Japan's role in the alliance, to oppose the status quo in the Indo-Pacific being changed by 'brute force', with strengthening of extended deterrence to deter China and North Korea's growing nuclear arsenals (MoFA, 2022b). Echoing an earlier speech by President Biden (which itself had a precedent in declarations by former Vice-President Mike Pence, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during the Trump administration), in a speech to the CSIS, Hayashi stated the world already appeared to be dividing into two camps – the G7 and other aligned democracies, versus Russia and other autocracies. In this invocation of Cold War-style rhetoric, Hayashi stated the need to reach out to 'middle-ground countries', such as India, to increase the 'international circle of consensus' (CSIS, 2022b).

The Taiwan Strait Crisis

Regional tensions then escalated dramatically, following the visit to Taiwan by U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi on August 4, as part of an East Asia tour, after which China immediately conducted a week-long series of large-scale military drills around Taiwan. These included ballistic missile tests, with five landing in Japan's claimed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the first time China had dared such a provocation. China traded hostile accusatory rhetoric with Taiwan, the U.S., Japan and Australia, in the worst period of tension since the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis. The 2022 crisis showed the willingness of China to 'normalise' the deployment of its PLA forces over the median line of control in the Taiwan Strait, and extend PLA patrols and exercises, including missile tests, to encompass the entire seas and airspace surrounding Taiwan (Lin & Wuthnow, 2022).

In the week following the crisis, in the first address to the National Press Club in Canberra by a Chinese ambassador in 18 years, the new Ambassador Xiao Qian raised the prospects of reconcilable relations with Australia, but only on China's terms. This would require acceptance of reunification with Taiwan, which could involve 'all possible means',

and ‘re-education’ of the Taiwanese population, following reoccupation by Beijing (Lyons, 2022). By contrast, the energetic and social media-savvy Japanese Ambassador Yamagami Shingo (a former Director-General of the Intelligence and Analysis Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Yamagami, 2022a) stated that in wake of the Taiwan Strait crisis, Japan ‘has no better mate’ than Australia, and that the two countries ‘will defend the rules based regional and international order with every means available’ (Yamagami, 2022b). A sideline meeting of the TSD at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Cambodia condemned China’s launch of ballistic missiles near Taiwan, and recommitted to the FIOF and to diplomacy, to maintain the peace and security of the Taiwan Strait (Wong, 2022b).

But, the question of whether both Australia and Japan would join the U.S. in defence of Taiwan in case of Chinese attack still officially falls under the cloak of strategic ambiguity, although this now appears to be unravelling. President Biden has stated the U.S. would come to Taiwan’s defence with military force, and America continues to sell a significant number of arms to the Taiwanese armed forces, under the terms of the U.S. 1979 Taiwan Relations Act; but, official U.S. policy remains committed to the One China policy (Brunnstrom et al, 2022). This maintains that Taiwan is a part of China, and formal relations are only with the People’s Republic of China (PRC), but ‘unofficial’ relations are still conducted with the Republic of China (ROC) (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Former deputy Prime Minister Aso Taro stated Japan would support Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack (Taipei Times, 2021), and former Defence Minister Kishi Nobuo confirmed the SDF and the U.S. military are engaged in contingency planning for joint operations in Taiwan (Wilson & Kusumoto, 2021). But, Tokyo also officially maintains a One China policy, despite its close ties with Taipei (Inoue, 2022).

Former Defence Minister Dutton had said in November 2021 that it would be ‘inconceivable’ that Australia would not join the U.S. in a war over Taiwan under the ANZUS treaty, although he later backtracked, stating in March 2022 before the election that Australia may send weapons to aid Taiwan’s defence instead (Below and Norman, 2022). The Morrison government similarly kept to the One China policy (despite some confusion in Morrison’s statements) (Dziedzic, 2021), and this policy has since been maintained by the Albanese Labor government (DFAT, 2022a). The main foreign policy difference between Labor and the LNP has therefore been a tendency for LNP politicians to indulge in more hawkish rhetoric, while Labor has been firm but more measured when criticising China’s aggressive postures and human rights abuses. If an armed conflict over Taiwan were to break out, Australia and Japan would be pressured to join the U.S. in

opposing China, and thus possibly succumb to the momentum of diabolic escalation into a general war (Weaver, 2022).

The 50th anniversary commemorations of establishing full diplomatic relations with the PRC by both Japan and Australia provided an opportunity to improve relations in the present era, although there seemed little optimism for this to occur, given the strained ties (Takenaka, Kim, & Takemoto, 2022). Once Xi Jinping was secured for an unprecedented third term as President after October 2022 at the Chinese Communist Party Congress, the possibility of a long-delayed official visit to Japan may finally come about, which would be a major achievement for Prime Minister Kishida (Xia, 2022). The assassination of former prime minister Abe in July could also eventually result in implications for Japan-China relations. This shocking event subsequently led to revelations that around half of the LDP's Diet members, including at least 20 ministers, had some association with the Unification Church cult; this nefariously influenced government policy, impeding progress on gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights especially (Kelly et al, 2022).

As well as leading to record low approval ratings for the Kishida cabinet (Yamaguchi, 2022), this scandal particularly weakened the largest, and most conservative and hawkish LDP faction, *Seiwa Seisaku Kenkyukai* (founded by Abe's grandfather, former prime minister Kishi Nobusuke), which had been headed by Abe, with at least 37 faction members implicated (Mulgan, 2022). This may grant an opportunity for Kishi's *Kochikai* faction, which has traditionally favoured more conciliatory relations with China (and the Koreas), to assert greater influence (Soeya, 2022).

Return of the Russian Menace, and Arms Control Paucity

After Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine on February 24 2022, both Japan and Australia imposed a range of sanctions on Russia, and supplied the Zelenskyy government with non-lethal military equipment, as well as ODA, and have accepted refugees, making the two countries the most significant supporters of Ukraine outside of the NATO countries (Mark, 2022). While on his inaugural European trip, Albanese made a surprise visit to Kyiv in early July to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and doubled the number of Bushmaster armoured vehicles offered to the Ukrainian Armed Forces to 60, some of which were used in the successful September counteroffensive on the Kharkiv front (Prime Minister of Australia, 2022b).

This raised the amount of Australian military assistance to Ukraine to over AUS\$400

million, plus at least \$85 million in humanitarian aid. Australia will also raise the number of refugees to be taken in from Ukraine to at least 8,000 (compared to only 3,000 accepted from Afghanistan). The Albanese Labor government joined the Kishida LDP government in supporting investigations by the International Criminal Court into Russian war crimes, and condemned Russia for its mobilization of reserve forces and threats to invoke nuclear weapons (DFAT, 2022b). In retaliation, Japan and Australia were labelled ‘unfriendly’ countries by Putin’s regime ; this has been a more direct concern for neighbouring Japan, which found itself still dependent to a minor extent on Russian LNG supplies, and retaining a stake in the Sakhalin-2 gas development project (Smith, 2022).

On July 31, Putin announced a new Russian naval doctrine, which claims the waters around the Northern Territories claimed by Japan are ‘strategically important’, and will be defended with armed force if necessary (Rakov, 2022). It was hence no surprise that the Japanese 2022 defense white paper listed China, Russia, and North Korea as the main sources of concern for Japan’s security (MoD, 2022b : 1-5). Given the rotating presence of the RAAF and RAN in Japan for *Operation ARGOS*, and the looming ratification of the RAA, this raises the question of whether the ADF could become embroiled with defence of Japan against Russia in the north, North Korea in the Sea of Japan and on the Korean peninsula, and China in the Senkakus and Taiwan Strait (MoFA, 2022c). Defence minister Marles has condemned Russia’s mobilization of reserves, and Putin’s threat to use nuclear weapons, pledging Australia’s long-term support for Ukraine’s resistance to the Russian invasion (Martin, 2022).

The strategic shocks of the Taiwan Strait crisis and the Russia-Ukraine war have therefore served to heighten the sense of threat perceived by Japan and Australia, and so drive their security partnership even closer together. Both Australia and Japan firmly criticised Russia for blocking the release of the final declaration of the 2022 NPT review conference in August ; however, neither country has so far signed the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), claiming reliance on the extended nuclear deterrence of the U.S (UN, 2022). The Albanese Labor government may yet decide to follow the example of the Ardern Labour government in New Zealand, and ultimately sign the TPNW (ICAN, 2022). Representing Australia at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) annual meeting in September in New York, foreign minister Wong also condemned Putin’s latest threat to invoke nuclear weapons and Russia’s mobilization of reserves, following its latest setbacks in the war in Ukraine, and recommitted Australia’s support for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) (Wong, 2022a). She also signalled

another important symbolic shift at the UNGA, by pledging greater involvement of the perspective of indigenous peoples in Australian foreign policy, as well as reform of the UN Security Council, advocating for Japan to receive a permanent seat (RN, 2022).

At a sideline meeting with China's foreign minister Wang Yi, Wong again advocated restraint and de-escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Strait, while reiterating the One China policy held by Australia since 1972 (Robin & Dziedzic, 2022), ahead of another foreign ministers' meeting of the Quad (Wong, 2022c). Nevertheless, neither Australia nor Japan have shown any interest in suggesting or promoting a regional conventional arms control treaty, which could follow the model of the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, which was instrumental in helping to bring the Cold War to an end (OSCE, 2022). A treaty aimed at controlling the numbers of ballistic and hypersonic missiles in the region is another sorely needed arms control instrument, as Asia and Oceania comprise the largest share of world military expenditure, which exceeded US\$2 trillion for the first time in 2021. There seems little motivation for the states of the region to even consider attempts at arms control (SIPRI, 2022).

Recent Controversies in Japan-Australia Relations

The ongoing intensification of the security relationship, most recently reflected in the RAA, is indicative of the broad, wide-ranging mutual interests of the numerous stakeholders in both Japan and Australia, from the respective political leaderships, to the various relevant bureaucracies, militaries, and industry, all the way to general society. A Japanese government survey in 2018 showed 65% of Japanese felt an affinity towards Australia, the second-most favoured country after the U.S. (Cabinet Office, 2018 : 13). The Lowy Institute Poll of 2022 showed Australia had even higher warm feelings towards Japan, at 74%, the fourth-highest ranking (after New Zealand, Canada, and the UK) (Lowy Institute, 2022). Before the coronavirus pandemic, in 2019 Japan was the seventh-most popular destination for Australian tourists, with more Australians visiting Japan than vice versa (Gebicki, 2020).

A moment of diplomatic friction emerged though, as global energy markets were roiled by the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In a rare criticism of Australia's domestic revenue policy, Ambassador Yamagami warned the Queensland government against raising royalties on coal mining, which would be a disincentive for Japanese energy companies. Despite reassurances from Resources Minister Madeline King and

Trade Minister Don Farrell, Japan and South Korea were also concerned the Australian government might impose controls on LNG exports, in order to ease the inflationary effects of domestic supply shortages (Tillett, 2022a). The long-running dispute over Japan's commercial whaling also continues, as it still opposed by the Australian government with muted protest, but the issue is otherwise generally ignored (DCCEEW, 2022).

A scandal emerged after the defeat of the Morrison government, when in defiance of convention, the former Liberal prime minister skipped the first week of the new Parliament to attend a conference of former conservative leaders in Tokyo. The World Opinion Leaders Summit, hosted by billionaire Shintoist 'new religion' leader Handa Haruhisa, had also featured former prime minister of Canada Stephen Harper, and former prime minister of New Zealand John Key (Maiden, 2022a). Media reports soon emerged that Handa received an Order of Australia in the final days of the Morrison government (Commonwealth of Australia, 2022a). Morrison refused to clarify whether he attended the investiture, or whether he received any fees for appearing at the Tokyo summit. This raised the question of whether improper arrangements had been made by Morrison to grant the honour (Maiden, 2022b).

Even more alarming was the revelation in August that Morrison had himself secretly sworn into five ministries during 2020-2021 by the Governor-General, covering the portfolios of Health, Treasury, Finance, Home Affairs and Resources, supposedly to cope with the emergency circumstances of the pandemic. So far, there have been no major implications for foreign relations arising from this unprecedented action to concern allies like Japan, pending any further investigations into the affair from a judicial inquiry launched by the Albanese government (Evans, 2022). Despite these controversies, the ongoing close relations between Australia and Japan was still apparent though, following the shocking assassination of Abe Shinzo on July 8, at the end of the House of Councillors election campaign. Australia posthumously awarded the Honorary Companion of the Order of Australia (AC), the highest honour for a foreign citizen, reflecting his contribution to the Australia-Japan relationship (Commonwealth of Australia, 2022b).

Merely a week after attending the state funeral for Queen Elizabeth II, prime minister Albanese returned to Tokyo for Abe's state funeral on September 27, which generated considerable domestic political controversy over its public funding, and was boycotted by opposition parties. In one of the largest official delegations, which showed

just how deeply important the Japan-Australia relationship had become, former prime ministers Howard, Abbott and Turnbull also joined the foreign dignitaries, which included U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris and Indian prime minister Narendra Modi representing Japan's other Quad partners (Oaten, Armitage and Stein, 2022).

Japan and Australia's Mutual Defence Buildup

The LDP's plans to eventually double defence spending to 2% of GDP, possibly by the end of the decade, would be welcomed by Australia, as well as the U.S., and would raise Japan to the third-highest military budget in the world, after the U.S. and China. The Japanese MoD has procured for acquisition of a new range of standoff cruise and ballistic missiles, including hypersonic warheads, with an extended range to 1000 kilometres for at least 1000 missiles, to enable a counterstrike capability against China and Russia (Kelly, 2022). The Kishida government's new National Security Strategy (NSS) due by the end of 2022 expected to confirm this increase in the defence budget, and the new counterstrike deterrence doctrine which the new weapons systems would allow. An enhanced cooperative role for Australia in what has become a quasi-alliance could also result out of the NSS (Endo, 2022).

These ambitions for Japan's higher defence spending may still be limited by fiscal constraints, but at present, the defence budget continues to incrementally climb to record levels each year, as it has done since the LDP returned to government in 2012. The MoD 2023 budget request is ¥5.6 trillion, which could well rise to ¥6.5 trillion by the time the budget is finalized in April 2023. The goal of 2% of GDP defence budget would raise its expenditure to ¥10 trillion, raising taxes and cutting social security spending would likely be necessary to achieve this (Yamaguchi, 2022). The Lowy Institute's Power Index presently ranks the SDF as the 7th most powerful military force in the region, after the U.S., China, Russia, India, and South and North Korea; Australia is ranked 8th (Lowy Institute, 2022a).

The long-held objective of the LDP to hold a referendum to alter Article 9 of constitution, to first include formal reference to the SDF, is widely perceived as a stage towards enabling more active overseas deployment of the SDF to support Japan's allies. While Australia will not publicly comment on Japan's domestic political affairs, should the Kishida government finally move ahead with the referendum, with the support of the Japan Innovation Party and the Democratic Party for the People, and assuming it

is passed by the public, then such an alteration of Article 9 is likely to be welcomed by Australia, and certainly by the U.S. (Mason, 2022).

For its part, the Albanese government announced in August the first strategic review for a decade of the ADF's capabilities and structure requirements, to be conducted by former Defence Minister Stephen Smith (2010-2013), and former ADF Chief Angus Huston. Defence Minister Marles claimed the fast-changing regional security environment means the previous 2020 Defence Strategic Update of the Morrison government already needs to be updated. The Smith/Huston review is due to be delivered by March 2023, although there are concerns about the suitability of having Smith lead the review, given the controversies over funding and materiel in the ADF during his term as minister in the Rudd/Gillard governments, and the ADF's potential war crimes in Afghanistan at the time (Greene, 2022c).

As well as the nuclear-powered submarines, it is expected the review will recommend other major boosts to the capacity of the ADF, which will require an ever-rising defence budget, including for more warships for the RAN, fighter/strike aircraft for the RAAF, and missile/rocket artillery and amphibious capabilities for the Army. In the wake of the war in Ukraine, the ADF is likely to follow the trend of western military forces to increase missiles, drones, and cyber/space IT/AI support networks. The review could also contain further details about the extent of increasing cooperation with its security partners, including Japan (Kerr, 2022).

Towards JAUKUS, Six Eyes, or JANZUS?

While Japan has welcomed AUKUS, prime minister Kishida has consistently remained cautious about formally joining the controversial pact, since if the MSDF acquired nuclear powered submarines, this could violate the Atomic Energy Law, which limits the use of nuclear materials for civilian purposes only. The opposition parties Japan Innovation Party (*Nihon Isshin no Kai*) and the Democratic Party for the People favour acquiring nuclear-powered boats for the MSDF; but the LDP's coalition partner *Komeito*, the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party, and the Japanese Communist Party are strongly opposed (Kyodo News, 2022d).

So, while the prospect of an expanded 'JAUKUS' agreement is unlikely, despite advocacy by some commentators, increased cooperation on the non-nuclear aspects of

AUKUS is still set to proceed (Page, 2022). This is particularly so for supply chains, especially in renewable energy resources such as hydrogen and rare earth minerals, with Australia remaining Japan's most important source of LNG and coal in the interim. Collaboration on technology with more direct military applications will aid joint development of hypersonic missiles, plus in cybersecurity, and use of outer space for commercial, scientific and defence purposes, through JAXA and the new Australian Space Agency (Tillet, 2022b). More likely than JAUKUS is 'Six Eyes', where Japan could formally join the intelligence sharing pact between the U.S., the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, with ASIS likely to continue its training and advisory role to the various Japanese intelligence agencies (Mark, 2021). As mutual U.S. allies, both Japan and Australia would certainly be gravely worried over the intelligence security implications of the FBI's seizure of top secret and other classified documents from former president Trump's Florida residence Mar-a-Lago, since Trump may have compromised shared intelligence, particularly for SIGINT (Borger, 2022).

Another alternative to JAUKUS could be a revised JDSC, already being officially discussed, which would upgrade the security relationship to reflect the developments of recent years, described above. This would be just short of a bilateral military alliance, which would commit each country to the use of force for collective self-defence of each other in case of attack or general war. Even the 1951 ANZUS alliance does not specifically commit the U.S. and Australia to defend each other ; rather, it is an obligation to consult each other when they come under attack. ANZUS has only been invoked once, after the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks, which led to the ADF's 20-year involvement in the war in Afghanistan. Australia voluntarily chose to join the U.S. in the Vietnam War and Iraq War, and has long been deeply involved in the American nuclear warfighting network, principally by hosting the Pine Gap base in central Australia (Toohey, 2019 : 118-120, 145,150).

There may be scope for the TSD to be upgraded into a mutual security alliance similar to ANZUS. However, despite the steady diplomatic momentum that has continued to draw Japan and Australia's defence relationship ever closer, at the time of writing there is no indication of a formal trilateral 'JANZUS' alliance emerging, much less a quadrilateral JAUKUS agreement. Japan joining Five Eyes, to become 'Six Eyes' may be a more likely interim step though, as Japan and Australia deepen mutual cooperation through networks of overlapping bilateral and 'minilateral' security agreements.

Risks of Containing China

Critics of an American Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China's rise have claimed this would be 'reductive, reactive, and military-centric', as the main Indo-Pacific allies of the U.S., Japan and Australia, would also risk getting dragged along into a geopolitically flawed goal of attempting to contain China (Garcia, 2022). Unlike the Soviet Union in the Cold War, there is a high level of interdependence with China in the contemporary global economy, especially for the economies of Japan and Australia, as their largest trading partner. In such a complex and multidimensional global order, a simplistic, binary Cold-War style containment strategy led by the U.S. is unrealistic and self-harming (Nye, 2022 : 1640-1641). The Lowy 2022 Poll found a majority of Australians feel ties with the U.S. make involvement in war more likely ; a majority also nevertheless still support an increase in defence spending (Lowy Institute, 2022b).

While China is increasing its amphibious warfare capability, as part of the steady expansion of its naval forces, the PLA is still years if not decades away from achieving the heavy lift assets needed to attempt a large-scale amphibious invasion across the 90-kilometre Taiwan Strait, which would be a massive, and extremely hazardous undertaking (Quiggin, 2022). A more likely scenario should China decide to coerce Taiwan into falling under control from Beijing could be an also high-risk blockade, or some other combination of 'grey zone'/hybrid warfare, including subversion and insurgency (Lee & Blanchard, 2022). A classic 'security dilemma' may already be set in motion, where China feels driven to take some sort of forceful action, fearing the PLA will otherwise lose its regional military advantage in the coming decades, as the massive boost in military spending now being taken by the U.S. and its Pacific allies Japan and Australia takes effect (Guyer, 2022).

A recent wargame conducted by the CSIS shows the PLA's current arsenal of land-based missiles could quickly strike and potentially disable all ports and airfields used by the U.S. military in both the 'first and second island chains' – Japan, the Philippines, Guam, Hawaii, and possibly Australia (Schaus, 2022). Since over 90% of energy supplies and trade for Japan and Australia transit through the East China Sea, a high-intensity war with China would be devastating for both economies (Dunley, 2022). This is apart from the horrific risk of escalation into nuclear war between the U.S. and China, also potentially involving nuclear-armed Russia and North Korea (Rundle, 2022).

Australia and Japan therefore have the dubious distinction of sharing one of the most challenging and potentially fateful strategic dilemmas of the 21st century : whether to contain the rising geopolitical power of China by increased deterrence, thereby intensifying a regional arms race, with the attendant worsening risk of escalation into a disastrous armed conflict ; or, attempt engagement and some measure of détente with China, accepting, accommodating, and negotiating its role in the regional power structure and global economy, through diplomatic engagement and involvement in regional institutions ; or somehow manage some precarious balance of both approaches, as seems to be the current intent of both the Kishida and Albanese governments, as a form of ‘managed competition’. Senior Australian commentators such as strategist Professor Hugh White (White, 2022 : 83-92), and former Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd have warned against Australia (and implicitly Japan) blindly following the U.S. into a war with China over Taiwan, which would be not only unwinnable, but globally catastrophic (Rudd, 2022 : 20-29).

The Japan-Australia Relationship from an IR Theory Perspective

The post-war Japan-Australia relationship has thus been motivated by shared interests, which are only driving each other closer as the 21st century develops. In the Cold War, as Japan restored its economic prominence, trade and investment was the core for reconciliation. After the Cold War, security relations became more prominent, first in peacekeeping, and now in the shared security dilemma of China. The Japan-Australia relationship can thus be interpreted and analysed utilising a range of the main theories in the academic field of International Relations.

From a Liberal IR theory perspective (Steans et al, 2010 : 32-43), the Japan-Australia relationship is driven due to shared liberal democratic values, and shared commitments to international law, such as the Japan-Australia EPA, building on the earlier trade and friendship treaties, and joint participation in international institutions, such as the United Nations, the Trilateral Security Dialogue, and the Quad. The Constructivist school can be used to argue that a shared identity around Japan-Australia relations has been chosen by its various foreign policy decision makers (Hurd, 2008 : 302-303), to reconstruct the image of each other from former wartime rivals, to economic and security partners, linked through the identity as the major mutual allies of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region. A key example has been the construction of the concept of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, with its declaration by Shinzo Abe at the 2016 TICAD conference in Kenya. The

FOIP has become an important part of the constructed discourse to identify Japan and Australia within the U.S.-led hegemony of the region, and so provide a rhetorical means of countering China's challenge to that hegemony, even though that intention is always officially denied (MoFA, 2022d).

From the Realist school of International Relations theory, the Japan-Australia strategic relationship can be considered 'bandwagoning' behaviour, of two middle powers (with Japan the more powerful, senior partner) combining their potential military strength to balance against the rising threat of China (Kroenig, 2022). This is hopefully in alliance with their mutual prime security guarantor the U.S., but also as a hedging strategy in case American extended deterrence weakens, due to its internal political instability. The Japan-Australia alliance will thus be ever more vital to Indo-Pacific security, if the other Quad partners, the U.S. and India, descend into populist authoritarianism. If Donald Trump manages to somehow evade several criminal prosecutions and regains power after the 2024 U.S. election, or even just maintains influence over an increasingly extremist support movement and radicalised Republican Party, there is the danger of an autocratic, isolationist America (Swan, 2022). Narendra Modi's ultranationalist Bharatiya Janata Party government may see further alignment with Putin's despotic Russia, India's main source of imported weapons (Roy Chowdhury & Keane, 2021 : 266-277).

Conclusion

There is great continuity in the closeness of Japan-Australian relations following the 2022 Australian election, due to the bipartisan commitment of the changing political leaderships, led by the respective prime ministers, and foreign and defence ministers on both sides, buttressed by the institutional support of the respective bureaucracies in both countries, especially the foreign and defence ministries, and the ADF and SDF. The Japan-Australia diplomatic relationship does not command a great deal of prominent public attention, but it does subliminally enjoy general public support. Only minor dissenting opinions among the peace movements of both countries, particularly the Greens Party, Japanese Communist Party, and anti-bases/war powers movement; but these critical voices are effectively marginalized, and struggle to gain attention and support.

The Japanese and Australian governments are now ideological mirror images – the conservative LDP-*Komeito* coalition, in power since 2012, and after the 2022 Upper House election, secure in power for at least another three years ; the social-democratic Labor Party, with Greens and progressive crossbenchers in control of the balance of power

in the Senate, also for at least the next three years. However, despite these ideological differences, shared foreign policy interests will ensure that the already historically close diplomatic relationship between Australia and Japan is set to deepen further yet, driven by the mutual concerns of a more multipolar global order in flux, threatening a more unstable and dangerous geopolitics.

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Abstract

In Australia, there has traditionally been a bipartisan approach towards foreign policy held by the major political parties, the conservative Liberal-National Party (LNP) Coalition, and the social-democratic Australian Labor Party (ALP) . This has proved to remain the case in Japan-Australia relations, following the national federal election on May 21, 2022, which saw the defeat of the LNP after nine years in power, and the ascendancy of the new Labor government, led by Anthony Albanese.

Prime minister Albanese and foreign minister Penny Wong visited Tokyo for the Quad leaders' summit on the day they were sworn into office, demonstrating the ongoing importance of the relationship between Japan and Australia. Deputy defence minister Richard Marles visited soon after, to facilitate the ongoing interoperability between the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) and Japan's Self Defense Forces (SDF) .

This contribution examines the diplomatic process which led to the 2020 Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) security treaty between Japan and Australia, and the possible implications of the 2021 AUKUS pact. It will demonstrate the continuity in Japan-Australia relations in the transition from the LNP to Labor governments following the 2022 election.

It will then analyse how despite some minor diplomatic controversies, the security relationship continues to deepen, in the wake of the Ukraine War and Taiwan Strait crisis. This is manifested through ever closer cooperation between the ADF and SDF, driven by the imperatives of regional and global geopolitical rivalries. It concludes with a brief critical analysis of the Japan-Australia relationship from differing perspectives of International Relations Theory.