

Talk to Aotearoa/New Zealand on AUKUS, US-Australia alliance and the people's movement.

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Thank you for this invitation and we are honoured to be asked to speak at your webinar on AUKUS and implications of this military pact for the people of Australia, and of course the people and the environment of this region.

My name is Shirley Winton. I'm speaking from Naarm/Melbourne on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people, the Kulin Nation. I pay my respects to the First Nations elders past, present and emerging and their long and rich culture. I stand in solidarity with the First Nations people in their 240 year long struggles against colonisation, for sovereignty, land rights, self-determination and genuine Treaty/ies.

I apologise if my talk repeats some information in Bevan's talk.

Like you, our friends in Aotearoa/ New Zealand, opposition to foreign military bases in Australia goes back over 50 years. It is no co-incidence that Australia is sometimes described as the 51st state of the USA.

Bevan has spoken already about the first two US intelligence military bases in Australia, Pine Gap and North West Cape, established in mid-to late 1960s. Since then both bases have been extensively expanded and upgraded. Pine Gap is US's most important intelligence base outside its own country.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s protests were held outside these and other US military bases in Australia. In 1974, 400 people from across the country held a Long March to North West Cape, and in 1984 a women's protest was held outside Pine Gap.

In 2010-2011 the US President Obama and US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton visited Australia to announce the new US military strategy and re-orientation called the US Pivot to Asia-Pacific. 60% of US land, sea and air military forces, materiel and infrastructure spread across the world - would be relocated to Asia-Pacific, enmeshing Australia more deeply into the US military and its war machine.

The US Pivot required permanent rotation of 2,500 US marines in Darwin, upgrading and expanding Australia's naval, air force defence/military facilities and building new bases to accommodate and permanently embed US military into Australia's defence infrastructure and industries.

Ensuring Australia's defence and foreign policies are tightly locked into the US military machine and global policies. Parallel to this was even closer political alignment to US globally and locally.

Significantly, the first world public announcement of the US Pivot was made in Australian parliament. Obama was flanked by the fawning Labor Prime Minister Gillard who gushingly welcomed US militarisation of Australia to be turned into a US base and launching pad for US wars. Giving away sovereignty. The two major parliamentary

parties enthusiastically supported the announcement without an open parliamentary debate and public discussion of the implications for the Australian people and sovereignty. Bob Brown, the Greens Senator at the time, was the lone public voice in parliament warning of subservience to US.

The immediate community response to the pivot was a gathering in late 2011 to early 2012 of several organisations (8 at that time) with the aim of establishing a broad national network campaigning for an independent and peaceful Australian foreign policy; ending US marines & bases in Australia.

Independent and Peaceful Australian Network (IPAN) was launched on 21 September 2012, on the UN Peace Day.

By 2014, several academics, retired defence personnel, former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, and community groups were warning that Australia was being turned into a launching pad and a base for US wars.

IPAN continued to build the national network of peace, community and faith organisations and unions. National conferences were held in Canberra, Brisbane, Alice Spring, Melbourne, Darwin. Murray Horton spoke at the 2017 national conference in Melbourne.

All the while Australia's military facilities were being upgraded and expanded and new ones built to accommodate the increasing US military in the country.

Protest rallies were held outside Pine Gap during the 2015 IPAN National conference in Alice Springs.

Australia's deepening integration into the US military and war machine could no longer be hidden. People from different walks of life including academics, former defence and army personnel, started to publicly question and warn of the dangers of Australia's defence and military merging into the US military and under its command.

The US Pivot to Asia-Pacific coincided at the same time with US driven Trans Pacific Partnership. Our friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand are very familiar with the TPP and your people's mass movement opposing it. Trans Pacific Partnership was the economic side of the US Pivot into Asia-Pacific, to contain China's economic raise and reinforce US economic hegemony.

People are probably familiar with US economist Milton Freedman, who famously declared that US investments and corporations around the world are protected by the mighty iron fist of the US military.

To make Australia a US garrison, or the 51st State of the USA, it's necessary to have an uninformed and compliant population conditioned politically and ideologically by propaganda to accept Australia's subservience to the US and China's threats to our national security. US corporations dominate Australia's economy and wield power in corridors of political power. Murdoch's media monopolies and a handful of Australia's main stream media, relentlessly push US interests and propaganda. US is embedded in Australia's political, academic, military and media institutions. US corporations wield

power in Australia's corridors of power. A number of conservative and reactionary Think Tanks which have considerable influence over governments constantly roll out US propaganda. Australian Institute of Public Affairs, the United States Centre at Sydney University, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, the latter funded by multinational weapons corporations.

In September 2021 the Liberal Morrison government announced AUKUS, and Australia's acquisition of 8 nuclear submarines from US and UK. The announcement was framed as a national security imperative, to keep peace in the region and unimpeded freedom of navigation, claiming China's military was threatening to block international trade routes in the South China sea.

AUKUS is a US initiated military pact, a tool, to protect US interests in the region. It is easy to understand AUKUS in the context of US global economic supremacy being challenged by the economic rise of China and the great power rivalries between US, China, Russia and Europe. The US and EU and their military industrial complex want to maintain their global dominance. Economic competition for resources, markets, and spheres of influence is the main driver of imperialist wars.

AUKUS is product of the US-Australia alliance, with Australia as a subservient and compliant partner, a US deputy sheriff in the region to maintain US control and supremacy in the region. The leadership of the two main parliamentary parties happily embrace the US global supremacy, in spite of it not being in the interest of Australian people and global peace. There's not even an occasional whiff of independence or sovereignty from any of our governments. They're locking the Australian people into the US war machine and enforcing the so- called US global rules based order in our region. AUKUS is an instrument for the expansion of US military capabilities and its military-industrial complex.

AUKUS is being shaped into a NATO of Asia-Pacific.

The US Pivot to Asia Pacific, the Force Posture Agreement and now AUKUS, are militarising Australia's economy and industrial base. Since the early 1990s, globalisation gutted Australia's value added and manufacturing industries. There's little that Australia manufactures locally these days, but multinational and local mining corporations continue to dig up and export our minerals and natural resources from the stolen lands of the First Nations people. You often hear people refer to Australia as a quarry, a banana republic. And now the government is telling the people and unions that AUKUS and nuclear submarines will create jobs in the new weapons and ammunitions manufacturing industries – most are the multinational weapons corporations. AUKUS and nuclear submarines have opened the door to the push for nuclear power. Recently a British politician suggested that Australia would be a perfect place for storing world's nuclear waste on the lands of the First Nations People.

Since the announcement of AUKUS and nuclear submarines the militarisation of education is accelerating. Top ten global weapons manufacturers Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, are now embedded in Australia's universities, directing and funding university research into weapons of mass destruction, war

technology, cyber space war technology, making universities dependent on funding from these war mongers. They are now collaborating with the Defence and Education depts accessing secondary and primary schools' curriculums, offering scholarships and prizes to students for best designs in nuclear propelled submarines. Nuclear Submarine Propulsion Challenges in primary and secondary schools

AUKUS and nuclear subs. are making Australia a target in the event of war between US and China. It's not only the subs that make Australia China's military target – it's the entire AUKUS military pact that's bringing cruise missile ships and B52 bombers equipped to carry nuclear weapons, huge fuel storage tanks in north Australia, US soldiers, and military intelligence eg. upgrading Pine Gap and Five Eyes, cyber space (and these are only publicly known) that make Australia a Chinese target in the event of war between US and China.

Recently, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs announced that the government respects US policy of ambiguity, not confirming or denying if US war ships and bombers will carry nuclear weapons during their visits and stays in Australia.

Behind AUKUS military pact is the continuing integration of Australia into the US sphere of influence. Locking Australia economically into the US economic dominance for US economic interests, not the interests and well being of the people of Australia.

In March this year the Labor Albanese government announced it would spend \$368 billion of public funds over next 30 years on 8 hunter killer nuclear powered submarines. And the figure would be higher, closer to half a trillion. That's half a trillion taken away from public health, education, welfare, and fixing the urgent climate crisis. This is at a time of housing crisis, increasing homelessness, unaffordable rent, underfunded public hospitals, schools, and little protection of the environment. That's half trillion on wars of aggression. Many predict that Australia's expenditure on US led wars of aggression is more likely to reach one trillion within next 30 years. The only beneficiaries are the multinational weapons manufacturers who make a killing in super profits from death and destruction of imperialist wars.

AUKUS and nuclear submarines are intensifying tensions and accelerating the march to war.

The announced \$368 billion on 8 nuclear powered submarines sparked public outrage.

This is the immediate and tangible consequence of AUKUS on the people and Australia's alliance with the US to go to war with China.

It's against this background of escalating US militarisation of Australia, making Australia a vital US military base and following the US into another of its wars, that the movement against AUKUS, nuclear submarines, for peace and independence is growing in Australia.

In early November 2021, 6 weeks after the AUKUS announcement, 28 peace and community groups and organisations across Australia called a national zoom meeting to establish a national coalition to campaign against AUKUS and nuclear submarines, and call for peace. The zoom meeting was attended by 140 people and over 40

organisations. There was unanimous support for the formation of a broad nation-wide coalition and campaign to oppose AUKUS and Australia acquiring nuclear submarines.

The Australian Anti-AUKUS Coalition was launched in March 2022, calling for a national united front against the AUKUS Military Pact and Nuclear Submarines and for building a broad grass roots movement for peace and a nuclear free Australia.

Anti-AUKUS branches exist in all states and in some parts of regional Australia.

Events are regularly held in different states with the AAAC calling for national days of actions eg. rallies outside government ministers offices, public forums, rallies, local community meetings and forums, Hiroshima Day, public statements.

One of the successful nationwide activities initiated by the AAAC was a petition and statement "A Call for Peace" calling on the government to cancel submarines and AUKUS, and not to go into a US war with China. The petition statement was signed by over 1,000 individuals and organisations and published in two main national newspapers. In a matter of 6 weeks \$24,000 was raised in donations to cover the cost of placing the petition as an advertisement in the 2 newspapers.

The campaign to stop AUKUS and cancel nuclear submarines is also being taken up by unions. More unions are passing resolutions calling on the government to cancel Aukus and nuclear submarines. AUKUS and nuclear submarines are discussed at union conferences and delegates meetings. More union leaders are speaking out at public forums and rallies. Some unions are setting up *Peace is Union Business* groups.

The US wants one of the ports on the east coast of Australia to be turned into a base for nuclear submarines. Port Kembla, a mining and steel making town in Southern NSW is the preferred location for basing nuclear submarines for its deep waters port and an exclusion zone. Local unions and communities rose up in arms mounting a major grass roots campaign to stop the submarines. Their demand is Not here! Not anywhere!

Over the past 2-3 years Port Kembla Unions and Wollongong community have been developing a plan to transition from fossil fuel (coal mining) to renewable energy. The stationing of nuclear submarines in their port would scuttle their programme for transitioning to local renewables economy and long term secure jobs.

The Wollongong community and Port Kembla unions are drawing nationwide support from other unions and communities across the country. Port Kembla unions and community are inspiring other unions and communities. Some unions passing resolutions pledging support for port Kembla unions and communities.

The opposition to AUKUS is spreading slowly but more widely in the community and amongst Labor Party rank and file and branches. Rank and file members in more than 12 local ALP branches are passing resolutions calling on the government to cancel AUKUS and nuclear submarines and for an independent enquiry. Rank and file members have set up Labor Against War and Labor for Peace. ALP local branches are sending their resolutions to government members and to the ALP national conference which will be held on 17-18 August. Unions are planning to put up motions at the national conference to stop nuclear subs and Aukus.

Statements signed by academics, former politicians and defence department personnel are also being circulated and promoted.

Even though the Labor government has abandoned even appearance of independence there's no doubt the US is exerting strong pressure to keep Australia in its sphere of influence and one of its most reliable allies.

Building a broad mass movement on the ground, united to stop aukus and nuclear submarines and work for peace, is essential.

A regional non-aligned peace movement of the people to push back the US imperialist war preparations, is crying out to be built.

A movement not aligned with any imperialist power but unites for an independent and nuclear free pacific.

We hope we can build that movement together with our friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Just to finish off my talk. At the conclusion of the annual Australian-US Ministerial talks in Brisbane this weekend, US Defence Secretary Austin and Australian Defence Minister Marles jointly announced accelerated US militarisation of Australia – more US marines rotating through northern Australia, more US warships and war planes, more nuclear powered submarines visiting Australia (HMAS Stirling in West Australia), and production of US missiles in Australia.

Finally, I would like to conclude with a quote from a book by former intelligence officer with the Australian Defence Force, Clinton Fernandes in his book *Australia a Sub-imperial power, Australia in the International Arena*."You cannot have an independent foreign policy when you are a dependent economy."