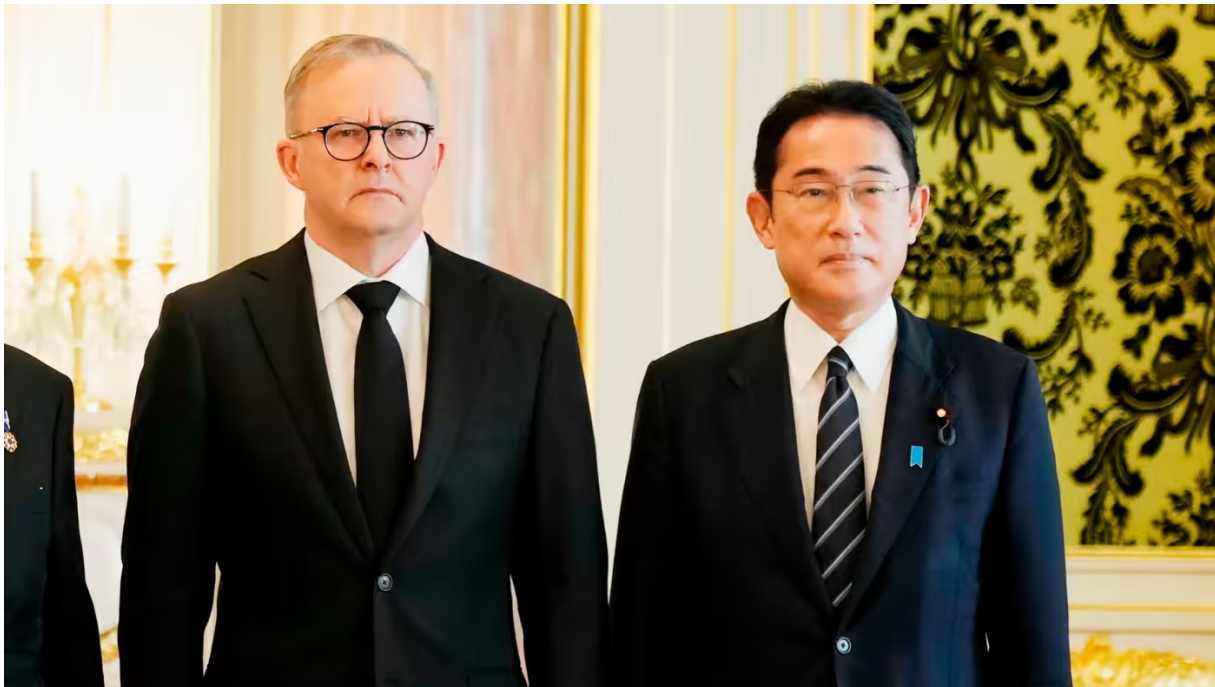


Japanese politics & policy

Japan and Australia set to strengthen military intelligence ties

Prime ministers expected to sign updated declaration on security co-operation to counter Chinese threat



Australia's prime minister Anthony Albanese, left, and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida in Tokyo last month © Hiro Komae/AP

Kana Inagaki in Tokyo and **Nic Fildes** in Sydney 12 HOURS AGO

Japan and Australia are set to deepen co-operation on military intelligence in the latest effort to strengthen security ties to counter the rising threat from China.

During a visit to Perth this weekend, Japanese prime minister Fumio Kishida and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese are expected to upgrade a declaration on security co-operation, which was first signed in 2007. Tokyo also wants to secure supplies of Australia's liquefied natural gas and other energy resources, according to people with knowledge of the discussions.

The talks to expand co-operation beyond joint military exercises to intelligence-sharing reflect concerns on both sides about China's increased [military assertiveness](#) over the South China Sea and Taiwan.

If an agreement can be reached, it would also help with Tokyo's efforts to [increase its co-operation](#) with the Five Eyes countries — Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and US — and strengthen Japan's position as one of Australia's closest security allies outside Five Eyes and its Aukus pact with the US and UK.

“Japan has long wanted to bring its intelligence framework closer to the Five Eyes, but that won't be easy,” said Hiroshi Nakanishi, professor at Kyoto University, pointing to the lack of a security clearance system in Japan that is in line with international standards. “It will be a long-term effort but Japan wants to...”

international standards. “It will be a step-by-step effort but Japan wants to expand the range of intelligence it can share.”

Japan and Australia [signed a treaty in January](#) that allowed the military forces of the two countries to use each other’s bases. The move was hailed as an advanced defence force collaboration aimed at responding to China’s growing military ambitions.

Rikki Kersten, a professor at the Australian National University who specialises in Japanese politics, said that the two countries already share intelligence so the key will be how the new declaration works.

“Japan’s weaknesses in terms of a security partnership are the security of information,” she said, noting that the country was still lagging behind best practice due to its “stubborn reliance on fax machines” and a lack of parliamentary consensus around sharing technology.

“Australia has assisted Japan with setting up intelligence analysis capability training, but the question remains: can Japan protect our secrets if we share them?”

She said that the new declaration would need to be put in the context of Japan’s revised national security strategy, which it plans to release at the end of the year.

Thomas Wilkins, a senior fellow at the ASPI think-tank, said the two countries were likely to collaborate on technological development in quantum computing, artificial intelligence and hypersonic weapons.

“The bilateral agreement for transfers of defence equipment and technology, put in place in 2014 to facilitate Japan’s [ultimately unsuccessful] bid to provide submarines to Australia, may gain a new lease of life as the two countries explore ways to jointly develop or produce military hardware,” he said.

Wilkins also said it was likely that the two countries would work more closely together in the Pacific, in light of China’s diplomatic foray into the region, but that the declaration would stop short of a full military pact.

“Neither side will feel the need for, or be prepared to bear the consequences of, announcing a formal military alliance or treaty at this time,” he said.

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