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Albanese's Prolonged China Visit Sparks Concerns

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Prime Minister (PM) Anthony Albanese's extended six-day visit to China, aimed at strengthening trade ties, has drawn criticism for its length and focus, with detractors arguing it sidelines Australia's broader strategic interests. The Labor government's emphasis on Beijing, amid rising global tensions, raises questions about misplaced priorities.

Albanese's itinerary, spanning Shanghai, Beijing, and Chengdu, included high-level talks with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, alongside symbolic stops at the Great Wall and a panda research center. He touted outcomes like a Tourism Australia deal with Trip.com and discussions on steel decarbonization, emphasizing the \$312 billion trade relationship, per the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Yet, Coalition figures like shadow foreign minister Simon Birmingham criticized the trip's duration as excessive. "Six days in China while neglecting allies like the United States (US) sends the wrong signal," Birmingham told Sky News, pointing to the absence of a meeting with US President Donald Trump as a diplomatic misstep.

The prolonged visit comes as China's regional actions—such as February 2025 naval drills 650km off Australia's coast—heighten security concerns. Critics argue Labor's focus on economic gains glosses over these threats. The detention of Australian writer Yang Hengjun, raised by Albanese with no progress, further underscores China's intransigence on human rights. "The PM's spending too much time chasing photo ops instead of confronting Beijing's aggression," said former diplomat Dave Sharma to The Australian, reflecting centre-right frustration with Labor's approach.

Economic data adds to the skepticism. Australian foreign direct investment (FDI) in China fell 12% in 2024, per the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as businesses wary of regulatory hurdles pull back. China's push to ease Australia's foreign investment screenings, met with Albanese's vague assurances, highlights unresolved tensions. With Trump's tariffs looming and AUKUS under scrutiny, the PM's extended stay risks portraying Australia as overly reliant on China. Posts on X, like

those from @AusPolWatch, echo public unease, questioning Labor's strategic focus. As Albanese lingers in Beijing, the prolonged visit fuels concerns that Australia's national security and alliances are being sidelined for short-term economic gestures.