



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Abbott's Taiwan stunt adds fuel to the fire of war

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If Australia were genuine about opposing China's supposedly "expansionary" claims in the South China Sea, and the threat they pose to regional peace, we should also condemn the only government in the world that supports China's claims. But we don't, because that government is in Taiwan, which in fact claims more of the South China Sea by its 11-dash line than China does by its 9-dash line (and like China, Taiwan is also building up islands in the South China Sea, but this goes largely ignored).

Much of the current tension between China and the Anglo-American allies is based on ahistorical and deliberately misrepresented claims about China and its intentions, which ignore basic facts. The fact that little Taiwan, which we are seriously talking about defending in a war with China, actually has [greater territorial claims on land and sea](#) than China, is one example. But it must be ignored, because the narrative about China's expansionary claims in the South China Sea has been central to the agenda of neoconservative forces in the USA, UK, and Australia, to recast China as a threat to their "rules-based order".

Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott's 8 October speech to the Yushan Forum dinner in Taipei was riddled with such ahistorical and deliberately misrepresented claims that ignored basic facts. Worse, the very act of a former Australian PM visiting Taiwan to give such a speech, following another former PM, Malcolm Turnbull, addressing the same forum last year online, is a deliberate message to China that the Anglo-American faction pushing for confrontation with China are determined to tear up the basic agreement of facts that has underpinned China's relationship with the world for 50 years, even if it takes us to a war of annihilation.

Tony Abbott opened his speech with the usual grab bag of current false accusations against China:

"Two years back I hesitated to attend this conference lest that provoke China" he said. "But since then, Beijing has torn up the 'one country, two systems' treaty on Hong Kong; put upwards of a million Uyghurs into concentration camps; boosted cyber spying on its own citizens; cancelled popular personalities in favour of a cult of the new red emperor; brutalised Indian soldiers in the Himalayas; coerced other claimants in its eastern seas; and flown evermore intimidatory sorties against Taiwan."

Let's deal with those claims first:

1. Grenville Cross, the former director of public prosecutions of Hong Kong, [insists that Hong Kong's National Security Law](#) is the "triumph of decency over mayhem" and [ensures the survival](#) of "One Country, Two Systems".
2. Tony Abbott headed a government that actively demonised Muslims, publicised regular Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)/Australian Federal Police (AFP) raids, enacted sweeping anti-terror laws that shredded basic civil liberties, and tarred all Muslims with the terrorism brush by calling for "reform" of the religion. China, which suffered the greatest terrorism toll of any country outside Africa in the decade to 2017, at the hands of the al-Qaeda and ISIS-allied East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), implemented a poverty-reduction and deradicalisation program, not "concentration camps", for which 55 mostly Muslim nations expressed support at the United Nations.
3. Western politicians who attack China for cyber spying on its citizens ignore the mass-surveillance of their own citizens exposed by US National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden, but they also exaggerate China's system, as [Foreign Policy magazine admitted](#) in a 15 September 2021 article entitled "China's Social Credit System Is Actually Quite Boring. A supposedly Orwellian system is fragmented, localised, and mostly targeted at businesses."
4. Satire is officially dead when the Australian PM who is so devoted to his British Queen that he restored knighthoods accuses China of the "cult of the new red Emperor".
5. Abbott conveniently ignores that, as with the South China Sea, Taiwan supports China in its border dispute with India, as Taiwan regards itself as the real China, and claims even more territory than mainland China does.
6. Whatever is happening with China's eastern sea claims, Abbott again fails to acknowledge Taiwan shares the same claims.
7. China's flights over the corner of Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) are hundreds of

kilometres from Taiwan, [as the ADIZ is far larger than Taiwan's air space](#), and even stretches hundreds of kilometres into mainland China.

Abbott's most dangerous line, however, was his repeated insistence that "democratic" Taiwan should make its own decisions about its future, which he implied was free of China. This is a siren song of encouragement for Taiwan to declare independence, justified by the same empty platitude of "democracy" that we used to justify disastrous regime-change invasions in the Middle East. In this case, it's a recipe for a war of annihilation.

To appreciate how serious Taiwan declaring independence is, consider the recent warning [of retired US Army Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis in Business Insider](#) on 11 October that any war over Taiwan would severely harm the USA and risk nuclear conflict: "We should therefore do everything in our power to assist Taiwan in bolstering its self-defence capability, *and encourage their political leadership to maintain the status quo*" (emphasis added), Davis wrote (p. 14).

[In a 19 June 2021 podcast](#), Singapore's former foreign minister George Yeo and former Ambassador to the UN Kishore Mahbubani emphasised China's decision to establish relations with the USA was based entirely on the USA accepting there was one China. "So that is bedrock", Yeo said. "It is not a card. If you play the bedrock as if it is a card, then the structure upon which an edifice is built can rapidly collapse. ... So from China's perspective, there must be no ambiguity. They have made it very clear that even if it means war, so be it."

That is the fire Tony Abbott, and whoever he is working for, is playing with. If Australians don't want war, we should heed the advice of former Australian Deputy Ambassador to China John Lander, who wrote in the [Australian Alert Service on 22 September](#) that Australia could pull back from the brink of conflict by reaffirming our support for the One China policy enshrined in the 21 December 1972 Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations ("Paris Agreement"), which is still official Australian policy.

As recently as 2004, [then-Foreign Minister Alexander Downer told China](#) that in the case of a military clash over Taiwan, the ANZUS treaty with Washington is symbolic and that Canberra would not side with Taiwan. Australia should take away Tony Abbott's matches and return to that position.