

Morrison, Sinodinos join pigs at the AUKUS trough

After leading a government that trashed Australia's relationship with China, Scott Morrison and Arthur Sinodinos have joined Kurt Campbell's US influence network cashing in on war talk.



L-R: After raising tensions with China, Scott Morrison and Arthur Sinodinos have now joined Kurt Campbell's American influence network to profit from those tensions. Photos: Wikipedia

At his 15 March 2023 appearance at the National Press Club, the media challenged former Prime Minister Paul Keating on whether his financial ties to China, from his role as former Chair of the International Advisory Board of the China Development Bank, influenced his firm views that China is not a threat to Australia or the United States. The imputation was that Mr Keating's views were so out of step with the prevailing US-UK-Australian narrative, that they must be influenced by Chinese money. Mr Keating revealed that his 13-year position at China Development Bank was paid \$5,000 per year.

For some reason most of the Australian media are far less interested in the conga line of senior Australian ex-Ministers and government officials now lining up to shamelessly feed at the trough of mega-bucks flowing from the \$368 billion AUKUS submarines deal.

They include:

- Former Treasurer and Ambassador to Washington Joe Hockey, whose consultancy Bondi Partners promotes the business opportunities from AUKUS;
- Former Defence Minister Christopher Pyne, whose Pyne and Partners similarly spruiks the AUKUS gravy boat;
- Former Australian Strategic Policy Institute honchos Peter Jennings and Michael Shoebridge, now in a private firm called Strategic Analysis Australia;
- Former John Howard chief of staff, senior Liberal Party Senator, and Ambassador to Washington Arthur Sinodinos, now with The Asia Group, an American strategic advisory firm; and
- Former Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who has taken advisory board positions with major US think tanks the Hudson Institute and the Centre for a New American Security (CNAS), and is rumoured to be weighing a commercial role with a British weapons manufacturer.

The last two examples, which are also the most recent, are especially interesting, and revealing. (The first three were reported thoroughly in AAS, 26 April.)

First, it is shocking that there are even rumours of Morrison going to work for a British arms manufacturer like BAE Systems. AUKUS was hatched secretly between Morrison and the British PM Boris Johnson, not US President Joe Biden, who was only brought in later, seemingly without enough time before

the announcement to learn Morrison's name ("that fella down under"). The AUKUS deal involves a large chunk of the \$368 billion for nuclear submarines going to the UK, for BAE Systems to help manufacture, at its shipyard in Barrow-in-Furness, the subs that will be based on the UK's next generation

design. None of this deal would be possible were it not for the drastic deterioration in Australia's relations with China that occurred under Morrison's watch, which fed the false narrative of the China "threat". It would be blatant corruption for Morrison to go from provoking tensions with China to working for a foreign weapons manufacturer that is cashing in on those tensions.

Strategic Svengali

What is confirmed is that Morrison has joined the Advisory Board of CNAS, at the same time as Sinodinos has joined The Asia Group. This is especially interesting because both were founded by the same US foreign policy Svengali, Kurt Campbell, Joe Biden's so-called "Asia Czar".

Campbell co-founded the CNAS think tank in 2007 with Michelle Flournoy (who was paid over \$450,000 a year to run it). Biden's former press secretary Jen Psaki and current CIA head Avril Haines, who had contributed to Obama's drone program for extrajudicial killings, also served in CNAS. Neoconservative Victoria Nuland, who has played a key role in the Ukraine escalation as Biden's undersecretary of state, also served as CNAS CEO. The top donors of the CNAS include the

crème de la crème of the US arms industry, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon, which stand to profit handsomely from Morrison's AUKUS deal.

After founding CNAS, in 2011 Kurt Campbell was the architect of Barack Obama's Asia Pivot, to shift the USA's strategic focus from the mess it had made in the Middle East to confronting China. This policy set in train the events that have poisoned US and Australian relations with China and normalised talk of war.

In 2013, having organised the Asia Pivot, Campbell cofounded The Asia Group, a commercial consultancy that helps companies, including defence contractors, penetrate markets in the Indo-Pacific region. It should be considered a conflict of interests that Campbell advocates a more muscular military presence in the region while potentially profiting from that posture, but such integrity concerns seemingly don't apply to the military industrial complex.

The Asia Group's website touts, among other exploits, a project in which the company helped an unnamed defence contractor get a multi-billion-dollar contract with the Australian government. [The Asia Group's press release on Sinodinos's appointment](#) makes clear he's been hired to help them make money from the AUKUS cash cow:

*Washington, DC | May 1, 2023 — The Asia Group ("TAG") is pleased to announce the launch of an Australia practice, chaired by former Australian Ambassador to the United States the Honourable Arthur Sinodinos AO and the newest partner in the firm. ... Ambassador Sinodinos joins TAG as Partner and Chair of the Australia Practice, where he is responsible for developing and executing the firm's business strategy in Australia and supporting C-Suite executives from across TAG's geographic portfolio to manage evolving risks and seize emerging growth opportunities. Ambassador Sinodinos' experience in foreign service, particularly at the forefront of Australian engagement with the United States, provides an invaluable perspective **at a time when multilateral engagements through AUKUS, the Quad, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework are all opening new pathways for commercial engagement.** (Emphasis added.)*

Morrison and Sinodinos are former senior leaders of the government that undermined Australia's independent national interest, in terms of our relationship with our biggest partner, to align with the USA's strategy of confronting China. It says something of the omnipresence of Anglo-American foreign influence in Australia that they can now join strategic Svengali Kurt Campbell's US consultancies and think tanks that are cashing in on this confrontation, with barely a ripple of interest in the media or Parliament.

By Robert Barwick, Australian Alert Service, 10 May 2023