

As usual, British neocons stoke US-China conflict

Britain's neoconservative foreign policy and intelligence establishment is once again playing Iago to the USA's Othello, stoking the paranoia that could escalate tensions into a showdown with China. Just as Tony Blair's support and deliberately fabricated intelligence was indispensable to the Bush-Cheney administration achieving its pre-planned agenda of invading Iraq, and as then-Foreign Minister Boris Johnson scrambled to convince newly elected president Donald Trump to keep the USA engaged in the Syrian regime change fiasco against his campaign promise to withdraw, British neoconservatives are front-running the agenda to "punish" China for the COVID-19 pandemic, which risks a serious breakdown in relations, especially between the USA and China.

Leading the baying pack is the hard-core neoconservative group the Henry Jackson Society (HJS). On 5 April, the HJS was the first organisation to formally call for China to pay COVID-19 reparations, of over £3.2 trillion to the G7 countries alone, for its "early handling of the disease and failure to adequately report information to the WHO". The HJS claimed that were it not for China's alleged delays, "the disease's spread would have been reduced by some 95 per cent". This call was quickly picked up in the United States: on 16 April, aggressive US Senator Tom Cotton accused the Chinese Communist Party of being "responsible for every single death, every job lost, every retirement nest egg lost from this coronavirus".

Of course, this is cynical deflection by the HJS and its US co-thinkers. All through late January, February and early March, as China battled the outbreak in Wuhan, its closest neighbours South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore all took urgent countermeasures, and were able to keep the virus in check, while the UK and USA were slow to respond, despite having the same information, and are now experiencing the worst outbreaks. It's now convenient for the UK and US governments to blame China, but it is also dangerous.

On 20 April, the HJS stepped up its campaign with a virtual forum on countering China, titled "The Atlantic Alliance During a New Age of Great Power Competition". Its theme was bringing the Western world together to confront the authoritarian dictatorship in China, which they accuse of using technology, medical support, and infrastructure building to subvert the West and impose their form of social control on the rest of world. The speakers all admitted that China's massive infrastructure building, its rapid move to provide medical support against the coronavirus, and its highly effective and cheaper advanced technology is "winning hearts and minds", but they insisted it is all a trick to impose China's authoritarian dictatorship on the world. They denounced Serbia, Hungary and Italy for having fallen for China's ploy.

That this is laying the foundation for eventual war was expressed more explicitly by one of the HJS's political friends, former British MP and Defence Secretary Tobias Ellwood, in a 27 April diatribe against China in the *Mail on Sunday*. A regular speaker at the HJS, and the Parliamentary Secretary to Defence Secretary Liam Fox at the time of the infamous Libya intervention in 2011, Ellwood denounced Donald Trump for inaction against China, comparing the situation to the 1930s "which could easily lead to war", concluding that "it is time for Britain, in particular, to act".

Echoing the HJS theme from a few days earlier, Ellwood said there is a "wider struggle for global power now under way. We are at a geo-political turning point as China attempts to reshape the world order to suit itself." His column implicitly conjured the Churchillian myth of Britain standing alone against tyranny, to call for Britain to "stand firm in defending our values and standards as we did in the 1930s.... The world is fast moving into a dangerous new era. If we don't take the initiative—as we have done in the past, then who will?"

The HJS exists to maintain and deepen the special relationship between the USA and UK that underpins the Atlantic alliance. As the alliance was born in wars in which the USA saw itself as the rescuer of the UK and Europe, the HJS works to keep the United States embroiled in permanent war. The HJS's Statement of Principles is a recipe for permanent war. It includes:

2. Supports a "forward strategy"—involving diplomatic, economic, cultural, and/or political means—to assist those countries that are not yet liberal and democratic to become so.

In other words, regime-change operations against countries that are not "democracies".

3. Supports the maintenance of a strong military, by the United States, the countries of the European Union and other democratic powers, armed with expeditionary capabilities with a global reach, that can protect our homelands from strategic threats, forestall terrorist attacks, and prevent genocide or massive ethnic cleansing.

This means the right to invade countries they accuse of committing genocide or ethnic cleansing.

6. Believes that only modern liberal democratic states are truly legitimate....

Meaning the UK and USA have the right to overthrow governments that don't meet their criteria of "democratic" as they deem those governments are not legitimate.

Named after the US Senator, Henry "Scoop" Jackson, who personally mentored the USA's leading

neoconservatives including Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz, the British HJS's international patrons are a Who's Who of the USA's so-called "deep state"/pro-war apparatus, such as: Carl Gershman, President of the National Endowment for Democracy, which was set up to fund regime-change operations once funded by the CIA; former CIA Director James Woolsey; Richard Perle, the notorious "Prince of Darkness" in the George W. Bush administration; and William Kristol.

The HJS and its collaborators are the interests whose regime-change adventures in Iraq, Libya and Syria have killed millions and destabilised the entire Middle East and North Africa. They revel in war, as HJS founder Brendan Simms demonstrated when he boasted in a 2011 column that the Libya intervention proved "Democracy can be dropped from 10,000 feet"—i.e. nations can be bombed into becoming democracies. Their goal now is to destroy the remnant of collaborative relations between the USA and China, so war becomes inevitable.

By Robert Barwick, Australian Alert Service, 29 April 2020

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