

The China narrative part two: Dissidents or separatists?

Clive Hamilton's books exposing China "interference", Silent Invasion and Hidden Hand, are important, not because of the quality of the content—paranoid propaganda—but because the influencers behind Hamilton's crusade reveal his role as a cog in a vast narrative-management machine. The public, as well as MPs and other government officials, are being directed how to think about China by a small group of ideologically driven propagandists, funded by institutions of the section of the Anglo-American power establishment that seeks war without end, even risking nuclear warfare that would annihilate mankind. (Part two of a series. Read part one [here](#); part three [here](#); part four; and part five.)

In *Silent Invasion* (2018), Australian academic Clive Hamilton insisted Australian universities should invite dissident Chinese writers and intellectuals onto their campuses and take steps "to ensure that Chinese students [from mainland China] are removed from their ideological ghettos by having them attend courses on human rights and democracy...." Unchallenged testimony from Chinese "dissidents" and "democracy activists" is routinely used as evidence in the ongoing anti-China campaign. Closer examination reveals many prominent "dissidents" are in fact separatists, funded by Western "democracy" promoters intent upon regime change.

The history of clandestine funding of Chinese separatist movements is long. In the 1950s, the US government authorised the CIA's covert assistance to the "Tibetan internal resistance movement": providing logistical support and training in guerrilla warfare; paying [US\\$15,000 a month to the Dalai Lama, according to CIA veteran John Kenneth Knaus](#); and running a propaganda campaign, all intended to "[confront, thwart or harass](#)" the Chinese communist government. The program ran for almost two decades.

National Endowment for 'Democracy'

Today, separatist activities are funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a non-profit which [receives hundreds of millions of dollars](#) in US government funding, to "promote democracy" overseas. In 1991, NED founding member Allen Weinstein declared: "[A lot of](#) what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA."

NED is widely criticised for its leading role in a litany of coups and regime-change operations in countries the USA and UK and their subservient allies consider adversaries. In 1993 [Barbara Conry](#), a US foreign policy analyst at the CATO Institute, said NED used taxpayer funds to "harass the duly elected governments of friendly countries, interfere in foreign elections, and foster the corruption of democratic movements". NED's activities would "otherwise be possible only through a CIA covert operation". Such activities "would be illegal for foreign groups operating in the United States", Conry noted, yet NED is "exempt from nearly all political and administrative controls."

NED declares that democracy "has acquired the status of the only broadly legitimate form of government". This echoes the original founding principles of warmongering British neoconservative think tank the Henry Jackson Society (HJS), whose co-founder Dr Brendan Simms thinks countries can be bombed into democracy: "Democracy can be dropped from 10,000 feet", Simms boasted in 2011. NED officials are on the HJS advisory board.

In *Hidden Hand*, Hamilton quotes NED's assessment that "authoritarian powers like China" rely on "sharp power, the exercising of coercive and manipulative influence". This is pure projection—NED has funnelled millions into China projects for decades, with significant funds going to vague "democracy" initiatives. For years, NED has funded pro-democracy activities in Hong Kong and supported prominent Uighur organisations [with, as documented by The Grayzone, ties to the US intelligence apparatus](#).

In 2012, [NED declared](#) that China "has become what Chinese Nobel Peace Laureate Liu Xiaobo has termed 'a blood transfusion machine for other dictatorships', promoting its own model of autocratic capitalism as an alternative to democracy. ... [Therefore] NED will place special emphasis in the period ahead on supporting activists and intellectuals in China...."

China 'dissident', neoconservative conformist



The late Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo (seen here with Nancy Pelosi posing with his portrait.)
Photo: Flickr

Liu Xiaobo (1955-2017) was a famous Chinese dissident writer who was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for “his eloquent and powerful defence of human rights”, according to Hamilton. Silent Invasion researcher Alex Joske, Hamilton’s connection to the extreme anti-China Australian Strategic Policy Institute (funded by the State Department and NATO) claimed in the 4 September 2017 *Sydney Morning Herald* that “democracy activist” Liu [pushed “for a change in regime by focusing on gradual change in society”](#).

In truth, Liu was a hardcore neoconservative and supporter of colonialism, whom the [15 September 2010 Guardian reported as saying](#) that “to choose westernisation is to choose to be human”. Liu endorsed the US- and UK-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, saying horrific civilian and coalition casualties were the “price [that] must be paid” to “[overthrow Saddam’s tyranny and establish a democratic Iraq](#)”. Over years, NED donated millions in funding to Liu’s organisations, the literary Independent Chinese PEN Centre and *Democratic China* magazine. In 2014 Liu was the recipient of NED’s Democracy Award. In 2008, Liu published his democracy and human rights manifesto, “Charter 08”, which “[called for a Western-style political system in China and privatisation of all enterprises and farm land](#)”. A [2009 CIA cable](#) obtained by WikiLeaks revealed many of the signatories to Charter 08 had been discredited in China in 2004, “when over 200 intellectuals signed an open letter supporting the US invasion of Iraq, causing them to ‘lose credibility’ for their ‘extreme pro-Western’ views.”

[According to Joske](#), after spending a year working as a visiting scholar in the USA, in 1989 Liu “rushed to Beijing to join student protestors”, where he [played a leading role](#) in the Tiananmen Square protests. In a 2018 exposé on Tiananmen, [independent journalist Godfree Roberts](#) reported that the Taiwanese government had funded Liu’s flight from Washington.

Three years before Tiananmen, George Soros, billionairebacker of European so-called “colour revolutions” through his powerful organisations, which have toppled governments targeted by the US and UK neoconservative agenda, had endowed his “Fund for the Reform and Opening of China” with US\$1 million (a large sum in China at the time). By 1989 Chinese authorities suspected Soros’s funds were a CIA tool, an allegation which had previously surfaced in 1987. As Roberts reported, [events around Tiananmen had the flavour of a colour revolution](#): a top CIA operative experienced in regime change, James Lilley, stationed as US ambassador to China; CIA logistical support of student protestors; Gene Sharp, author of the colour revolution manual, moved to Beijing by the CIA; and US government-funded Voice of America radio broadcasting information on the protests towards Chinese audiences. NED opened two offices in Beijing the year before Tiananmen, and mailed thousands of incendiary letters from Washington to China. After the protests, the CIA’s Operation Yellowbird exfiltrated four hundred Tiananmen leaders to Western countries.

In an obviously calculated insult, [Hamilton launched](#) a Chinese-language edition of *Silent Invasion* to coincide with the 30th anniversary of Tiananmen Square. Hamilton wrote contemptuously, “The CCP remains deeply anxious about ‘ideological infiltration’ by hostile forces bent on regime change in China.” Is it any wonder? [In 2006, NED acknowledged](#) Chinese news reports associating American NGOs with the European colour revolutions, which, according to NED, had “alarmed authoritarian governments, alerting them to the precariousness of their hybrid, pseudo-democratic regimes”.

Jasmine revolution

In 2011, a wave of pro-democracy protests broke out across China. Famous dissident Wang Dan (recipient of NED’s 1998 Democracy Award) declared this “Chinese Jasmine Revolution” was modelled on the then-recent revolutions of the Arab Spring, a series of destabilising “pro-democracy uprisings” [which were actually US- and UK-backed regime-change operations](#), funded by NED.

The Chinese Jasmine Revolution was ignited by an anonymous call for pro-democracy protests, posted on US-based Chinese language website Boxun, and disseminated through activists’ social media. Boxun’s founder, Weican Meng, has received significant funding from NED through his organisation, China Free Press. Through Boxun, Jasmine organisers said the movement would experience three

stages: warming up, protest, and battle. The evolving situation was closely monitored by Stratfor, a private intelligence agency contracting with defence corporations and the US government. Internal emails obtained by WikiLeaks reveal an anonymous source told Stratfor an informal group inside the USA, who had been involved in the “1989 Pro-democratic Movement”, had initiated the movement. Stratfor analysts considered that although small, the protests were significant, as they represented crossregional organisation. The analysts insisted the Jasmine movement was instigated outside of China, communicating with domestic participants: “This is not a popular movement. It is an attempt at foreign manipulation.” Curiously, Jon Huntsman, the US ambassador to China, “inadvertently” [happened to be present](#) at the first Jasmine protest. According to Stratfor’s analysis, “Protests are extremely common throughout China”, but are usually locally focused and not “calls for democracy or for any sort of new government, they are simply asking for good governance on the part of the CPC.”

The US-based NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) chided the Chinese government for their “[disproportionate response to a non-existent ‘revolution’](#)”—arresting activists, deploying large numbers of police and increasing online censorship— which ultimately caused the attempted Revolution to fizzle out.

Revealingly, a Stratfor analyst acknowledged the Chinese government believed the “Jasmine people” were “being directed by the CIA to launch Tiananmen II”, notably in the wake of violent US/NED-backed revolutions of the Arab Spring. Whatever the merits or otherwise of its methods, this paints the Chinese government’s “disproportionate” response in a different light—no government would tolerate a foreign-directed insurgency.

One of the Jasmine activists arrested and imprisoned was Wu Lebao, a “cyber-dissident” who now resides in Australia, deemed “[China’s lonely voice of dissent](#)” by Australian media. Wu attended university with Alex Joske, who published an article about the activist. The youths co-authored a student newspaper piece alleging CCP influence on their university campus, which Hamilton referenced in *Silent Invasion*.

Wu, a [former coordinator](#) at Liu Xiaobo’s NED-funded Independent Chinese PEN Centre, told ABC in 2008 he was involved in “dissident activities” and was questioned by authorities over whether he had “connections with foreign powers”. In 2011, 27-year-old Wu was arrested under suspicion of leading the Jasmine Revolution, [inciting netizens](#) (online citizens) “to subvert state power and overthrow China”. Wu maintains he was wrongfully imprisoned by authorities, who claimed his social media posts were evidence of plans for sedition. Wu’s Twitter posts throughout the period were replete with jasmine-related code words activists allegedly used to communicate: “[For the first time](#) since Jasmine, I didn’t drink tea and sprinkled flowers on the weekend”. On Twitter, Wu [recounted](#) his father coming to him in the middle of the night and telling him not to lead the Jasmine Revolution.

Wu denies leading the Jasmine movement, however in 2013 he [tweeted](#): “The Ministry of Public Security is the reason why I started to mobilise people.” [Later, Wu said](#): “Unlike the Jasmine Revolution [sic] in the Middle East and North Africa, China’s dissident social network Twitter is regarded as the true main battlefield of the revolution....”

Wu’s Wikipedia page, which is linked in his Twitter bio, says he is suspected of leading the Jasmine Revolution with dissident artist Ai Weiwei, whom Wu knows well and was staying with at the time. Ai has turned dissidence into a lucrative arts career, [speaking at](#) the US-based Anglo-American establishment think tank, the Council on Foreign Relations; [collaborating with](#) Amnesty International and [receiving awards from](#) HRW—both powerful weaponisers of “human rights” for the regime-change apparatus. During the Jasmine Revolution, Wu [quoted Ai](#): “This country may end in the hands of a group of people who don’t like to sleep at night”.

In 2011, NGO the Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) [reported Wu’s “arbitrary detention”](#). The [Grayzone has revealed](#) that CHRD receives funding from NED, and shares an address with the Washington, DC office of Human Rights Watch. [US government-funded](#) Radio Free Asia (RFA), part of what the 26 December 1977 *New York Times* called the “[Worldwide Propaganda Network Built by the CIA](#)”, has [quoted Wu as an anti-CCP source](#) since RFA first reported Wu was “tortured” during his 2011 detention.

Clive Hamilton’s advocacy of prominent Chinese dissidents and the Dalai Lama (recipient of NED’s 2010 [Democracy Service Medal](#)) aligns with the agenda of anti-China agitator-in-chief, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Pompeo has reverently quoted Liu Xiaobo and thrown his support behind dissidents including Wei Jingsheng, whom Pompeo named the “[father of the Chinese democracy movement](#)”. Wei was the recipient of NED’s 1998 Democracy Award and his foundation has received significant NED funding for years.

The Chinese “dissidents” feted by Hamilton and much of the Western media are part of a vast network of activists, with NED—the US government-funded regime-change plotters— at the centre of the web. Their goal is not achieving democracy and human rights, but to destabilise China and overthrow its government. Or as “cyber-dissident” Wu Lebao tweeted, in terms reminiscent of British geopolitical schemers: “This evil empire must be divided.”

By Melissa Harrison, Australian Alert Service, 26 August 2020
