

With friends like these... Fake concern for Australia's winemakers

Australian winemakers are the latest casualty in the ongoing breakdown of the Australia-China relationship, with China's recent "anti-dumping" tariffs devastating Australia's wine industry. "Dumping" is when a producer sells a product overseas cheaper than at home, undercutting producers in the importing country, which is the complaint of China's winemakers. Australia is prolific in levying anti-dumping actions, with 18 measures currently in force against China (11 initiated between February and July 2020 alone). By contrast, China has hit Australia with a grand total of two anti-dumping measures.

As reported by ABC on 2 December 2020, in response to the tariffs a "global alliance of parliamentarians" launched a highly publicised video campaign urging their constituents to "stand up against [China's President] Xi Jinping's authoritarian bullying ... by drinking a bottle or two of Australian wine and letting the Chinese Communist Party know that we will not be bullied". The video was made by the InterParliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC), comprising parliamentarians from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the USA and Europe.

Unfortunately, IPAC's proposed gesture of buying "a bottle or two" of sympathy wine is not going to save Australian winemakers. China accounts for 40 per cent of Australia's export market, worth over \$1 billion a year. The Chinese market saved Australian winemakers over the last five years, according to Tony Battaglene, chief executive of Australian Grape & Wine industry group.

IPAC's parliamentarians declared they #StandWithAustralia. However, they do so in name only. Many of IPAC's members are the most extreme anti-China politicians in their nations, counterparts of Australian members Andrew Hastie and Kimberley Kitching, who are pushing for the Five Eyes nations—the USA, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand—and their allies to "decouple" economically from China. Australia is the guinea pig in this campaign, which is smashing Australian exporting industries and businesses. Yet while IPAC is cheering Australia on for destroying its trade relationship with its biggest trading partner, IPAC members' home countries are gleefully filling the resulting gaps in the China market.

IPAC's pro-war 'human rights' crusaders

IPAC formed in June 2020 to "promote a coordinated response between democratic states to challenges posed by the present conduct and future ambitions of the People's Republic of China." One of the stars of IPAC's patronising wine consolation video, Australian Labor Senator Kimberley Kitching, claimed therein that China had demanded Australia stop "voicing out in defence of human rights and the rules-based order", and alleged that "China has cancelled a whole range of Australian imports, in an attempt to bully us into abandoning our values. ... This isn't just an attack on Australia, it's an attack on free countries everywhere."

This is typical sanctimony from IPAC members, who couch their anti-China campaigns in terms of "human rights" and "democracy", yet are themselves pro-war, pro-regime change, and demonstrably anti-human rights. Look no further than Australia's IPAC representatives, who are members of the notorious "Wolverines", the bipartisan gang of federal politicians loyal to the USA, which includes IPAC co-chairs Kitching and Liberal MP Andrew Hastie, who starred in IPAC's launch video. In July 2019 Hastie compared China to the Nazis, and he collaborates with the extreme neoconservative British Henry Jackson Society (enthusiastic promoters of the catastrophic regime-change war in Libya) to disseminate its anti-China polemics in Australia. Other Australian IPAC members include Liberal "Wolverines" Senators Eric Abetz and James Paterson. Abetz recently demanded three witnesses to a Senate inquiry denounce the Chinese Communist Party before they gave their testimony, simply because they were of Chinese origin. His naked McCarthyism earned him widespread condemnation.

IPAC's global members are similarly extreme. One of its international co-chairs is the UK's former Conservative Party leader Sir Iain Duncan Smith, who as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions was responsible for "some of the cruellest, most extreme welfare reforms" the UK had ever seen, as described by a petition against Smith's knighthood which received over 284,000 signatures. In December 2019, disability advocates called for a criminal investigation, alleging Smith's policies were closely linked to the suicides and deaths by starvation of numerous disabled benefit claimants.

IPAC's US co-chairs are Senators Robert Menendez and Marco Rubio. Menendez demonstrated his sincere commitment to human rights when he: co-sponsored the Israel Anti-Boycott Act bill, which proposed to make it a federal crime for Americans to protest actions by the Israeli government against Palestinians (an ironic contrast to IPAC's alleged concern for the human rights of Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang region); campaigned against Julian Assange; opposed withdrawal of US troops from Syria and Afghanistan; and received donations from the anti-Iranian Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) while it was still designated a terrorist organisation by the USA.

Likewise Rubio, who: adamantly pushed for the disastrous US military intervention in Libya; supported the invasion of Iraq; co-sponsored a Senate resolution objecting to the United Nations Security Council's condemnation of Israeli human rights abuses (to which Menendez also objected); opposed

banning torture, and in 2014 voted against publishing the Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA torture.

IPAC co-chair Professor Irwin Cotler (Canada) has also defended Israeli human rights abuses while opposing United Nations investigations into them; and is a staunch promoter of the interventionist “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine.

Other IPAC parliamentarians represent neoconservative organisations including the US International Republican Institute, which fronts as a “democracy builder” while using taxpayer funds to foment regime change.

IPAC’s “advisors” are a collection of China antagonists all linked by their involvement with US-backed propaganda agencies: discredited far-right evangelical Adrian Zenz, who believes he is “led by God” on a “mission” against China; Vicky Xu of the US State Department-funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute, key author of the academically fraudulent *Uyghurs for Sale* (AAS, 14 Oct. 2020); and Mareike Ohlberg of the CIA-linked German Marshall Fund—Ohlberg co-authored Australian academic Clive Hamilton’s latest book, *Hidden Hand* (2020), the sequel to his 2018 book that whipped up “yellow peril” hysteria in Australia, *Silent Invasion*. Other IPAC advisors represent organisations sponsored by the US National Endowment for Democracy, which the US government funds to agitate among the populations of countries it is targeting for regime change. IPAC’s Sinologist, Robert Suettinger, formerly worked for the US State Department and the CIA.

IPAC: a poor ‘ally’

These CVs show that IPAC’s pro-war and pro-regime change parliamentarians’ championing of “human rights” and “democracy” is as farcical as their pretend concern for Australian winemakers.

IPAC’s London-based Strategy and Communications officer, Samuel Armstrong (who is also Director of Communications for the Henry Jackson Society), laid it on thick when he told the 1 December 2020 *Sydney Morning Herald*: “When China threatens Australia, it threatens us all. Standing up for our allies and shared values is sometimes costly but when the drinking is this good, doing nothing to protect our antipodean friends would not just be immoral, it would be a good bottle wasted.”

The extent of the “cost” our “allies” at IPAC are prepared to incur for “standing up for ... shared values” is a measly bottle of wine. Meanwhile, their home countries scoop up the trade opportunities created by the repercussions of their members’ “Chinagate” campaign on Australian businesses.

Australia needs to wake up to itself. As an obedient vassal state to the USA and UK—which the late former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser called Australia’s “dangerous allies”—we have wilfully destroyed our relationship with our biggest trading partner, China, which had *saved our wine industry over the last five years*. The people cheering us on, IPAC’s anti-China parliamentarians, are simply another arm of Anglo-American interventionist foreign policy masquerading as “human rights” crusaders. Australia’s winemakers are collateral damage and IPAC’s fake concern adds insult to injury.

By Melissa Harrison, Australian Alert Service, 16 December 2020