

# Divide and conquer will destroy humanity

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## Lead Editorial

19 May 2021  
Vol. 23. No. 20

As rotating head of the UN Security Council, China is leading the push for an Israel-Palestine ceasefire, but despite two closed meetings on 14 and 16 May, the USA has blocked a unified Security Council statement. In his remarks at the 16 May meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi declared that “China will continue to firmly support the just cause of the Palestinian people to strive for the restoration of their legitimate national rights, support a just solution to the current issue through political dialogue”. Visiting the region in March, Wang had foreshadowed that China would elevate justice for Palestine during its UNSC chairmanship.

While China has been trying to address the crisis in the Middle East, a top US State Department official on 12 May denounced Beijing for turning its Western province of Xinjiang, populated by Uyghur Muslims, into an “open-air prison”, a term frequently used to characterise Gaza. Hypocrisy levels have now hit “extreme”. The comments coincided with the release of a State Department report on Chinese oppression of Uyghur Muslims, which is typical propaganda. Unlike Gaza, the people of Xinjiang are free to come and go and visitors from anywhere in the world are welcome. Xinjiang has more mosques per capita than any other region of the world and abject poverty has been eliminated. In Gaza, two million Muslims and Christians are blockaded on all sides, lacking in electricity, food and clean water, and are now being bombarded daily, with even high-rise apartment buildings demolished by bombs from a modern air force, leaving thousands dead or injured and many thousands homeless. (p. 13)

Meanwhile, one person is benefiting from the Gaza escalation, and that is Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been PM for 12 consecutive years in addition to a previous three year stint, and has been miraculously saved from losing the top job—not to mention from jail—on countless occasions in recent years (yet unlike Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin he’s never accused of trying to be “PM for life”).

The century-long conflict was engineered to keep nations of the region pitched against each other, preventing cooperation that would transform a crucial crossroad between Africa and Eurasia. It is clear the age-old British imperial notion of “divide and conquer” is alive and well, whether it be the contrived conflict in the Middle East or inflated threat of China in the “Indo-Pacific”.

Veteran journalist and former *Australian Financial Review* deputy editor Max Suich revealed in an 18 May article, “China confrontation: what were we thinking?” (part of a series), that Australia knew the consequences of picking a fight with China—which is what we consciously did, he asserts—yet we did not even have confidence the USA would back us up. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, he wrote, knew our “push back” would likely “provoke trade penalties” and that the “new relationship would have to be defined by push and shove”. Australian agriculture and business, now being gutted by a trade war of our own making, were not warned.

China is being targeted precisely because it has attempted to transcend divisions and bring nations across the world together in “win-win” cooperation. Its focus on advancing civilisation to meet the challenges humanity faces is clear in its Mars mission. China has gone from being desperately poor and backwards when Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon, to on 15 May being the second nation to successfully land a rover on Mars, marking another leap for mankind on the pathway to interstellar exploration.

Instead of acting as mouthpieces for divisive policies, Australian leaders should urge cooperation, such as President Putin proposed in January 2020 when he called for a special summit of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—the USA, UK, France, Russia and China— to achieve the unanimity required to face pressing global challenges.

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