



Anti-China crazies rampage on Capitol Hill and Wall Street

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The newly minted Committee on the Present Danger: China (CPDC) (AAS, 3 Apr. 2019, p. 8) has staged high-profile events on Capitol Hill and on Wall Street, to promote the idea that the United States should be leading a new Cold War to overthrow the Communist Party of China. While the group is dominated by fringe neoconservatives who have been rightly marginalised for their extremist rhetoric, they are intersecting a poisonous climate in Washington, in which China is increasingly defined as an existential enemy to be confronted on the economic, financial and military fronts.

The CPDC's call for all-fronts confrontation with China was recently echoed in statements by a prominent Trump Administration official. On 29 April Kiron Skinner, director of policy planning for the Department of State, told an audience at the Centre for American Progress, a liberal think tank financed by mega-speculator George Soros, that China poses a new and existential threat to the United States and the world. "This is a fight with a really different civilisation and a different ideology, and the United States hasn't had that before", she said.

Skinner elaborated: "The Soviet Union and that competition was, in a way it was a fight within the Western family. It is the first time we will have a great power competition that is not Caucasian." In the Trump Administration's December 2018 National Security Strategy both China and Russia were termed "revisionist powers" seeking to overturn the Western system, but Skinner asserted that the threat from China is far more serious than the challenges coming from Russia: "We see [China] as a more fundamental long-term threat. In China we have an economic competitor, we have an ideological competitor, one that really does seek a global reach that many of us didn't expect a couple of decades ago." She acknowledged that she was describing the supposed threat as being of the "clash of civilisations" type.

Skinner invoked the famous "Long Telegram" of 22 February 1946, sent from Moscow by American diplomat George Kennan to the secretary of state. In this seminal document of the Cold War, Kennan warned about a threat from the Soviet Union, and called for a strategy of long-term "containment". After the then-secret telegram came an article in the July 1947 *Foreign Affairs*, journal of the New York Council on Foreign Relations, in which Kennan—writing under the pseudonym "Mr X"—elaborated publicly on his call for a Cold War. The article caused an immediate public sensation, spreading the notion that the United States was losing the ideological battle against Soviet Communism. Even before Sen. Joe McCarthy's notorious witch hunt for "reds under the beds", the fear-mongering about the Soviet menace by Kennan and other London-allied members of the US foreign policy establishment launched the Cold War—barely a year after the United States and the Soviet Union had been allies in the fight to defeat Hitler and the Nazis.

Skinner went on, "We're now looking more deeply and broadly at China. And I think State is in the lead in that broader attempt to get something like a 'Letter X' for

China, what Kennan wrote. You can't have a policy without an argument underneath it."

Gingrich and the CPDC

Addressing a 10 April CPDC event on Capitol Hill, former Speaker of the House of Representatives (1995-99) and Trump advisor (2016) Newt Gingrich mirrored Skinner's call for a new "Mr X" to lead the charge against China. "If you draw the comparison with the Cold War, we are right now in the moment just before Kennan wrote the Long Telegram. We haven't had a wake-up call, we don't understand what the problem is, we don't understand what the scale of the response is going to have to be. And we are losing."

Gingrich vowed to resurrect the House Un-American Activities Committee, which drove the anti-communist fervour in America in the 1950s, even after McCarthy was sidelined.

The Capitol Hill event was keynoted by Stephen Bannon, who briefly served as campaign manager and then presidential strategist for Trump. Bannon, along with neocon ideologue Frank Gaffney, head of the Centre for Security Policy, co-founded the CPDC. One of its core principles is total disengagement from China until the Communist Party of China has been dislodged from power.

CPDC has come under early criticism for its extremist approach to dealing with China. The group has been looking for allies with greater political credibility than its own core members, who are well known for their hysteria about China. The Capitol Hill event featured speeches by Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Rep. Chris Stewart of Utah, both Republicans. Stewart is a three-term Congressman serving on the House Select Committee on Intelligence.

Courting Wall Street

On 25 April Gaffney, Bannon and company briefed a Wall Street audience on China's "unrestricted warfare". Their speeches echoed a CPDC statement on the ongoing US-China trade negotiations. While endorsing Trump's tough stance on China's alleged unfair trade practices, the group argued that *any* trade deal with China will fail to address the scope of China's threat: "The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and of the People's Liberation Army speak and write openly about such strategies as 'Unrestricted Warfare'. These strategies aim to displace and, if necessary, destroy the United States by using, among other means, economic and financial lines of attack, electromagnetic pulses, cyberwarfare and terrorism."

While it would be comforting to believe that the American public and the leadership in the White House will not buy into such hysterical claims, too many Administration officials have recently echoed the sentiments expressed in extreme form by the CPDC. Acting Secretary of Defence Patrick Shanahan recently told Fox News that China is the number one threat to the United States. He has since been nominated by President Trump to be permanent Secretary of Defence.

Declaring another nation to be an "enemy" can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. And that is what the CPDC fanatics are counting on.