

# Who is paying for Morrison's anti-China provocations?

By Melissa Harrison

*Anthony Albanese has accepted an invitation to visit China to improve Australia's relationship with its most important trading partner, but a former PM is acting on behalf of foreign interests to sabotage the opportunity for progress from the visit.*

On 7 September 2023, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced that he would travel to Beijing within the next few months, to mark the 50th anniversary of former Labor PM Gough Whitlam's 1973 trip as the first Australian prime minister to visit China. In an historic 31 October 1973 speech in Beijing, Whitlam overturned decades of Cold War-era hostility by warmly advocating close cooperation and association between Australia and China. (Back page.)

The ABC reported on 8 September that Albanese believed dialogue between China and Australia would improve cooperation and engagement, and lead to "mutual agreement, mutual respect and advance the interests of both our nations". China's Ambassador to Australia Xiao Qian stated in a 28 September 2023 [address](#) that Albanese's trip would "take place at a significant moment as our two countries are standing at the start point of another 50 years of our bilateral relations. It's my belief that his visit will certainly exert an important influence on the sound and stable development of China-Australia relations in the coming years and decades."

Albanese's trip will be the first time a sitting Australian prime minister has visited China since 2016. This period of absence coincides with the massive anti-China propaganda operation levelled against the Australian public, led by national security and intelligence agencies acting in collusion with the mainstream media, which escalated from 2017. This operation successfully implemented a shadow foreign policy agenda of hostility toward China, in service of US-UK geopolitical goals ahead of Australia's own national interest.

However, Albanese's move to stabilise the Australia-China relationship is being sabotaged by Albanese's predecessor, former Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who has re-emerged after his election loss to agitate against China from the backbench. While serving as Prime Minister (in 2018-22), Morrison oversaw the Australian government's escalating hostility towards China, which significantly damaged Australia-China relations. The Morrison Government's numerous anti-China actions, which included developing a 2020 defence strategy which essentially re-committed to a Cold War with China,<sup>1</sup> deliberately provoked a trade backlash which severely impacted Australian exporters.

As reported by the ABC, two days before Albanese announced his visit to Beijing, Morrison warned a Coalition party room meeting against the Albanese Government's so-called "acquiescent and concessional approach" to restoring bilateral relations with China. One MP who was present told the ABC that Morrison "was warning us about [President] Xi and his regime—urging us to hold the line, and not follow Labor's approach". Morrison "continued to be proud at how his government stood up to China".

Shortly after Albanese confirmed his plans to travel to China to mark the anniversary of Whitlam's historic visit, Morrison provocatively announced that he would visit Taiwan to show his support for the island shortly before Albanese's trip. Morrison told the 20 September 2023 *Australian* that this would provide an "interesting contrast" to Albanese's visit. Morrison declared that regional security would not be achieved through

"appeasement" of China, and claimed that Albanese's visit carried significant risks, because China could use the event to create the impression of "a backdown by Australia". Morrison will speak at the 11-12 October

Yushan Forum, an event which is organised by the Taiwanese government and the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation, an ostensibly non-governmental organisation headed by numerous Taiwanese government officials. At the same Yushan Forum in 2021, former Liberal Prime Minister Tony Abbott made a provocative speech labelling China a "bully" and urging solidarity with Taiwan.

The history of China-Australia bilateral relations demonstrates that Morrison's behaviour is an act of deliberate provocation, continuing his pattern of calculated insults toward China. When Australia established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in December 1972, shortly after Whitlam's election, a crucial part of the agreement was Australia's recognition of the PRC as the sole legal government of all China. Australia acknowledged the PRC's position that Taiwan is a province of China, and broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan in early 1973. Under this "One China" policy, which is still in effect today, Australia does not recognise Taiwan as a sovereign state and "does not regard the authorities in Taiwan as having the status of a national government", according to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Instead, Australia maintains unofficial economic, trade and cultural contacts with Taiwan.

Chinese Ambassador Xiao expressed concern over both Morrison's planned visit and a delegation of Australian parliamentarians who had recently travelled to Taiwan to meet with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen. As reported by the 28 September 2023 *Australian Financial Review*, Xiao stated that these political figures "wear political hats, they carry political significance". Xiao said he hoped that Morrison and the parliamentary delegates would "stick with the One China policy in words and deeds" and refrain from engaging with Taiwan in a formal capacity, saying: "Their words, their actions on the question of Taiwan will absolutely bring about negative effects on the ongoing improvement of our relations between China and Australia". However, the 29 September 2023 *Australian* reported that in response to Xiao's concerns, Morrison retorted: "The Chinese government in Beijing does not get to decide whether Australian members of parliament can visit Taiwan or not, nor do they get to tell Australians or the world what Australia's One China policy means".

Morrison has not yet disclosed who will be paying for his trip to Taiwan to antagonise the Chinese government. However, Morrison's planned Taiwan address is just the latest in a bevy of international speaking engagements through which the former PM continues to agitate against China.

Morrison holds the distinction of being the first former prime minister to be formally censured by parliament, for secretly appointing himself to five ministerial positions, which caused a national scandal. However, Morrison's reputation as a disgraced former Prime Minister is apparently being rehabilitated, as he aims to be a fixture of the international speaking circuit (Morrison recently signed up with a talent



Liz Truss and Scott Morrison attending an IPAC event in Tokyo, February 2023. Photo: Screenshot

1. 'Morrison's indefensible Defence plan re-commits to Cold War with China', AAS, 8 July 2020.

agency which charges up to \$100,000 for speaking engagements with world leaders, in order to “facilitate [his] growing relationships with the private sector”). Having firmly established his anti-China *bona fides* while Prime Minister, Morrison has turned the damage he caused to Australian businesses and exporters, which suffered from the breakdown in Australia-China relations he provoked, into his own personal gain. In addition to speaking engagements, Morrison has received a series of appointments to the advisory boards of several anti-China policy think tanks.

### Morrison’s links to US and Taiwan-funded think tanks

In May 2023, Morrison joined the Strategic Advisory Board of the Centre for New American Security (CNAS), a hawkish US think tank. CNAS co-founder Kurt Campbell is the architect of the Obama Administration’s 2011 “Asia Pivot”, the USA’s military “rebalance” to the Asia-Pacific which was aimed at confronting China. Campbell, who has campaigned for increased hostility toward China for decades, chaired CNAS’ board until his January 2021 appointment as the Biden Administration’s “Asia Czar”, or the Coordinator for Indo-Pacific affairs on the US National Security Council. Campbell was a key negotiator of the 2021 AUKUS trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK and the US, which is likewise aimed at confronting China.

In a 4 May 2023 press release which announced Morrison’s appointment, CNAS CEO Roger Fontaine revealed that Morrison’s role in driving the AUKUS deal was an important factor in his appointment. Fontaine claimed that Morrison “spearheaded” the AUKUS agreement, of which Morrison was the “architect and founder”. Fontaine lauded Morrison for “[leading] his country’s efforts to deal with an increasingly aggressive China”.

CNAS is funded by the US State and Defence Departments and US weapons manufacturers, which stand to gain from Morrison’s ongoing agitation against China. In 2020, Taiwan was the fifth-largest customer for US arms sales, spending a total of US\$5.9 billion, a boon for CNAS’s sponsors. For several years CNAS has received six-figure donations (up to US\$250,000 per year) from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO), Taiwan’s de facto “embassy” in the USA (the USA also officially maintains a One China policy).

In a 22 April 2022 exposé, online publication MintPress documented that TECRO has donated significant sums to other prominent hawkish think tanks in the last several years. These TECRO-funded think tanks, which include Australia’s most notorious China-hawk organisation, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), have churned out reams of anti-China allegations.

Another TECRO-funded organisation is the Washington DC-based Hudson Institute, which appointed Morrison to the Strategic Advisory Board of its China Centre in November 2022. The neoconservative Hudson Institute is favoured by US Republican Party establishment figures, and receives funding from arms manufacturers. TECRO has occupied the top tier of the Hudson Institute’s donors (donating over US\$100,000 per year) since the organisation began divulging its sponsors in 2015. Hudson Institute fellows advocate on Taiwan’s behalf and travel to Taiwan for meetings with Taiwan’s top foreign ministry officials. In 2020, the Institute hosted an event with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who used the opportunity to make inflammatory statements against China.

In 2023, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) paid for Morrison to travel to Japan to attend IPAC’s 17 February Tokyo Symposium. IPAC is a UK-based anti-China

organisation which comprises an “international cross-party group of legislators” who work to “promote a coordinated response” towards China. IPAC receives US government funding through a quasi-governmental organisation, the National Endowment for Democracy. IPAC is also funded by NED-collaborator, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy. Morrison used his IPAC Symposium speech to impugn Chinese President Xi Jinping and claim that China had hegemonic designs over the Asia-Pacific.

### Morrison’s other benefactors

Morrison has declared accommodation and flights to the UK and USA, courtesy of the International Democrat Union (IDU), an organisation founded in London in 1983 by a group of conservative world leaders, including former US Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, and former British PM Margaret Thatcher. IDU, which describes itself as a “global alliance of the centre-right” has since expanded to include over 80 political parties from over 60 countries. IDU member parties include the US Republican Party, the UK’s Conservative Party and Australia’s Liberal Party, which was a founding member of IDU. IDU facilitates cooperation of “like-minded political parties” around the world to cooperate on foreign policy and share campaign techniques.

In August 2022, Morrison was appointed to IDU’s Honorary Advisory Board, joining numerous other former prime ministers, including David Cameron (UK), Theresa May (UK), Tony Abbott (Australia) and John Howard (Australia), who chaired IDU between 2002 and 2014. IDU’s current chair is former Canadian PM Stephen Harper, and its Deputy Chair is Brian Loughnane, a former Federal Director of the Australian Liberal Party. In December 2022, IDU funded Morrison’s trip to the USA, where Morrison participated in an IDU panel titled “China—Potential Partner or Intractable Opponent?” IDU itself is a peddler of familiar anti-China rhetoric.

IDU is opaque about its funding sources. However, an organisation which IDU described as a “Platinum” sponsor of IDU’s 2022 annual forum event was the Worldwide Support for Development (WSD) organisation.

WSD is a Japan-based non-profit organisation which was founded and chaired by eccentric Japanese billionaire and religious leader, Haruhisa Handa. Handa has donated tens of millions of dollars to Australian sporting and cultural organisations since the 1990s. In 1984, Handa founded his own Shinto-based religion, World Mate, which was embroiled in tax evasion and sexual harassment controversies.

Morrison has declared honorarium from the WSD. The organisation also paid for Morrison’s accommodation and flights to Japan to speak at WSD’s World Opinion Leaders Summit in July 2022, which was organised in collaboration with IDU. Morrison was criticised for missing the first sitting week of parliament to attend the conference. One of the Morrison Government’s last acts was to award Handa the Order of Australia, which Handa celebrated in a private ceremony in Japan on the first day of the Leaders Summit (Morrison declined to disclose whether he attended the ceremony or if he was paid to speak at the conference).

Morrison has also declared honorarium and business class flights and accommodation provided by the conservative South Korean newspaper, *Chosun Ilbo*, to attend the annual Asian Leadership Conference in Seoul. This event is hosted by *Chosun Ilbo* and boasts high profile political figures, including former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former UK PM Boris Johnson, as past speakers. *Chosun Ilbo* has a long history of fabricating defamatory stories about North Korea which later turn out to be false.