

Why Would China be an Enemy?

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I am completely at a loss as to why the UK should seek to join in with the US in considering China an enemy, and in looking to build up military forces in the Pacific to oppose China.

In what sense are Chinese interests opposed to British interests? I am not sure when I last bought something which wasn't manufactured in China. To my astonishment that even applies to our second hand Volvo, and it also applies to this laptop.

I have stated this before but it is worth restating:

I cannot readily think of any example in history, of a state which achieved the level of economic dominance China has now achieved, that did not seek to use its economic muscle to finance military acquisition of territory to increase its economic resources.

In that respect China is vastly more pacific than the United States, United Kingdom, France, Spain or any other formerly prominent power.

Ask yourself this simple question. How many overseas military bases does the USA have? And how many overseas military bases does China have?

Depending on what you count, the United States has between 750 and 1100 overseas military bases. China has between 6 and 9.

The last military aggression by China was its takeover of Tibet in 1951 and 1959. Since that date, we have seen the United States invade with massive destruction Vietnam, Cambodia, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya.

The United States has also been involved in sponsoring numerous military coups, including military support to the overthrow of literally dozens of governments, many of them democratically elected. It has destroyed numerous countries by proxy, Libya being the most recent example.

China has simply no record, for over 60 years, of attacking and invading other countries.

The anti-Chinese military posture adopted by the leaders of US, UK and Australia as they pour astonishing amounts of public money into the corrupt military industrial complex to build pointless nuclear submarines, appears a deliberate attempt to create military tension with China.

Sunak recited the tired neoliberal roll call of enemies, [condemning](#): “Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine, China’s growing assertiveness, and destabilising behaviour of Iran and North Korea”.

What precisely are Iran and China doing, that makes them our enemy?

This article is not about Iran, but plainly western sanctions have held back the economic and societal development of that highly talented nation and have simply entrenched its theological regime.

Their purpose is not to improve Iran but to maintain a situation where Israel has nuclear weapons and Iran does not. If accompanied by an effort to disarm the rogue state of Israel, they might make more sense.

On China, in what does its “assertiveness” consist that makes it necessary to view it as a military enemy? China has constructed some military bases by artificially extending small islands. That is perfectly legal behaviour. The territory is Chinese.

As the United States has numerous bases in the region on other people’s territory, I truly struggle to see where the objection lies to Chinese bases on Chinese territory.

China has made claims which are controversial for maritime jurisdiction around these artificial islands – and I would argue wrong under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. But they are no more controversial than a great many other UNCLOS claims, for example the UK’s behaviour over Rockall.

China has made, for example, no attempt to militarily enforce a 200 mile exclusive economic zone arising from its artificial islands, whatever it has said. Its claim to a 12 mile territorial sea is I think valid.

Similarly, the United States has objected to pronouncements from China that appear contrary to UNCLOS on passage through straits, but again this is no different from a variety of such disputes worldwide. The United States and others have repeatedly asserted, and practised, their right of free passage, and met no military resistance from China.

So is that it? Is that what Chinese “aggression” amounts to, some UNCLOS disputes?

Aah, we are told, but what about Taiwan?

To which the only reply is, what about Taiwan? Taiwan is a part of China which separated off under the nationalist government after the Civil War. Taiwan does not claim not to be Chinese territory.

In fact – and this is far too little understood in the West because our media does not tell you

- the government of Taiwan still claims to be the legitimate government of all of China.

The government of Taiwan supports reunification just as much as the government of China, the only difference being who would be in charge.

The dispute with Taiwan is therefore an unresolved Chinese civil war, not an independent state menaced by China. As a civil war the entire world away from us, it is very hard to understand why we have an interest in supporting one side rather than the other.

Peaceful resolution is of course preferable. But it is not our conflict.

There is no evidence whatsoever that China has any intention of invading anywhere else in the China Seas or the Pacific. Not Singapore, not Japan and least of all Australia. That is almost as fantastic as the ludicrous idea that the UK must be defended from Russian invasion.

If China wanted, it could simply buy 100% of every public listed company in Australia, without even noticing a dent in China's dollar reserves.

Which of course brings us to the real dispute, which is economic and about soft power. China has massively increased its influence abroad, by trade, investment, loans and manufacture. China is now the dominant economic power, and it can only be a matter of time before the dollar ceases to be the world's reserve currency.

China has chosen this method of economic expansion and prosperity over territorial acquisition or military control of resources.

That may be to do with Confucian versus Western thought. Or it may just be the government in Beijing is smarter than Western governments. But growing Chinese economic dominance does not appear to me a reversible process in the coming century.

To react to China's growing economic power by increasing western military power is hopeless. It is harder to think of a more stupid example of lashing out in blind anger. It is a bit like peeing on your carpet because the neighbours are too noisy.

Aah, but you ask. What about human rights? What about the Uighurs?

I have a large amount of sympathy. China was an Imperial power in the great age of formal imperialism, and the Uighurs were colonised by China. Unfortunately the Chinese have followed the West's "War on Terror" playbook in exploiting Islamophobia to clamp down on Uighur culture and autonomy.

I very much hope that this reduces, and that freedom of speech improves in general across China.

But let nobody claim that human rights genuinely has any part to play in who the Western military industrial complex treats as an enemy and who it treats as an ally. I know it does not, because that is the precise issue on which I was sacked as an Ambassador.

The abominable suffering of the children of Yemen and Palestine also cries out against any pretence that Western policy, and above all choice of ally, is human rights based.

China is treated as an enemy because the United States has been forced to contemplate the mortality of its economic dominance.

China is treated as an enemy because that is a chance for the political and capitalist classes to make yet more super profits from the military industrial complex.

But China is not our enemy. Only atavism and xenophobia make it so.

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*Featured image: AUKUS nuclear submarine deal is already making ripples across the Indo-Pacific.
Image: US Embassy in China*

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