

## Engaging with China does not mean being an agent of China

By **Stephen FitzGerald & Linda Jakobson**

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Link: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nats-leader-mccormack-has-abandoned-country-people-on-climate-change-20180226-h0wmx.html>

Clive Hamilton conveys a message which must be challenged, namely the insinuation that any person who engages with the Communist Party of China (CPC) should be viewed with suspicion or as belonging to a CPC fifth column ("Powerful relations raises a red flag", February 24-25). It is wrong and indeed damaging to Australia's interests if people (Hamilton refers to unnamed powerful corporate figures) who have dealings with the CPC are to be looked upon as untrustworthy.

As for Hamilton's warning that "it is a trap to believe that we now live in a Chinese world", we wonder what world he lives in. It is undeniable that the rise of the People's Republic of China affects us all. To ignore it would simply not be facing reality. We must learn to deal dispassionately with a government even if we abhor some of its policies and disagree with its political ideology.

Lastly, Hamilton's piece contains several inaccurate references to Linda Jakobson's work. For example, the piece states that Jakobson asserts that without Chinese investment we would spend less on hospitals and schools, so let's not have any more "public spats" and just get on with it. In fact, in the piece Hamilton refers to, Jakobson and fellow China Matters board director Andrew Parker point out that because foreign investment makes up the gap between our savings and our investment needs, lower foreign investment means making hard choices between funding our investment needs or spending on welfare, hospitals and schools. Sloppy referencing and unsubstantiated accusations call into question the credibility of Hamilton's claims.

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