

Five Eyes ropes NZ into Aus-style anti-China insanity

Like Australia before it, New Zealand is now well on the way to ceding its last semblances of sovereignty to the United States and Britain, on the pretext of defending against the imagined “threat” posed by China. It has been a decade longer in the making, but otherwise the process has been almost identical. Like Australian Labor Party Prime Minister Julia Gillard before her, NZ Labour PM Jacinda Ardern betrayed the independence in foreign policy her forebears had fought for, and laid the groundwork for New Zealand’s formal reintegration into the Anglo-American imperial war machine. Like the Liberal-National coalition under Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison, the government of NZ National Party PM Christopher Luxon, despite some early positive rhetoric regarding bilateral relations with China, now appears poised to bring New Zealand fully into the fold, including via an expanded “partnership” with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the most destructive military alliance in the world today—in violation not only of international treaties to which New Zealand is party, but of its own laws as well. And all of it driven by a years-long campaign of McCarthyite propaganda and behind the scenes machinations—including illegal spying, at home and abroad—of a national security establishment loyal to the empire and its interests, which exists to subvert the “democracy” it purports to defend.

Just a few years ago, it was often said that out of all the Five Eyes countries (the USA, UK, Australia, Canada and NZ), New Zealand was the one “winking”. Though it has continued throughout to be a member of that so-called “intelligence-sharing alliance”, NZ had for many years exhibited a strong independent streak, and taken little to no part in imperial geopolitical games. After the Labour government of PM David Lange banned nuclear materials from the nation’s sovereign territory, thus barring nuclear-powered and/or -armed US warships from its territorial waters, as part of its support for what became the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone and for nuclear disarmament more generally, the USA retaliated by “suspending its obligations” to NZ under the 1951 ANZUS (Australia-New Zealand-United States) collective security treaty, describing it thereafter as “a friend, but not an ally”. Both Labour and National-led governments had ostensibly upheld NZ’s nuclear-free status ever since, and the government of National PM John Key (in office 2008-16) continued the Helen Clark Labour government’s key role in crafting and organising support for what would become the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Key was (and still is) also a staunch proponent of maintaining good relations with China, upon which NZ is just as economically dependent as Australia.



Former NZ Associate Foreign Minister Matt Robson (right) told the Australian Citizens Party’s 20 July 2022 Citizens Insight show that NZ’s Five Eyes spy agencies sabotaged the nation’s independent foreign policy.

As former NZ Minister for Disarmament Matt Robson has noted, however, since 2001 New Zealand has gradually been swinging back into the US/NATO orbit—a process driven by what he described, in a [July 2022 interview](#) for the Australian Citizens Party’s *Citizens Insight* series, as “disloyalty ... at the top levels of [the] military and intelligence”, who have continually colluded with the USA in particular, behind the back of the government. At the time of the “9/11” attacks in America and subsequent US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, he recalled, “We were supposed to be shut out.... We were famously dumped as an ally, and were just a ‘friend’ of the United States. So we weren’t supposed to have any intelligence [or] any military cooperation. But that continued, between the heads of these agencies, who were basically saying [to the Americans], ‘Look, it’ll pass. These people [i.e. uncooperative NZ governments] will go.’ And the Americans kept them in the tent. So when 9/11 occurred, they jumped on a plane—I didn’t know; I was a Cabinet Minister, and I didn’t know they had authorisation—and went to Washington, and *requested of them to request the New Zealand government to send forces [to Afghanistan]!* So they were pushing their own agenda.” The success of which may be measured by the fact, as Robson later noted in a January 2023 speech in Havana, Cuba, that following on from the Key government’s signing of an “Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme” agreement with NATO in 2012, by the time of the June 2021 NATO summit in Madrid, Spain, Ardern had “learned to stop worrying and love the bomb ... and signed New Zealand up to the worldwide strategy of containment, and indeed subordination and possible war, of Russia and China”, by officially agreeing to be brought back under the USA’s so-called “nuclear umbrella” and opening the way to expanding the “partnership” further.

Back on the bandwagon

And expand it has. In June 2023, citing communications from the office of NZ's then-Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta, British press agency Reuters reported that "NATO is shifting all of its partnership arrangements to a new model called an Individually Tailored Partnership Programme [ITPP] and that New Zealand was currently working out the details." Mahuta was quoted stating that "Our ITPP will record long-standing areas of mutual interest between New Zealand and NATO, and possible opportunities for cooperation.... While the exact areas of work are yet to be agreed, we expect it will cover areas of common interest such as support for the international rules based order, climate change, and cyber security."

Current NZ Foreign Minister and Deputy PM Winston Peters (whose NZ First party was junior coalition party during Ardern's first term, and now plays the same role in Luxon's National government) has now told media that New Zealand "expects to conclude talks on its partnership agreement with the alliance in the 'coming months'", Reuters reported 5 April. "'New Zealand is committed to working together with NATO partners to contribute to collective security, such as through our support for Ukraine's self-defence', Peters said after attending the NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in Brussels on 3-4 April." As this AAS goes to print, Peters is in the United States, where he is reportedly scheduled to meet with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Deputy Secretary (and "Asia czar") Kurt Campbell, and separately with Australian Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy, to discuss New Zealand's possible accession to the tripartite AUKUS (Australia-UK-US) technology-sharing "security pact". Peters and other NZ officials have stressed that they do not seek and would not accept any involvement in the arrangement's so-called Pillar I, under which Australia is supposed eventually to acquire nuclear-powered submarines; however NZ, along with fellow NATO "partners" Japan and South Korea, are being touted as future members of Pillar II, which is intended to develop new missile, computing and other military and dual-use technologies.

Well-connected New Zealand geopolitical analyst Geoffrey Miller, in a 7 April blog post for the Victoria University of Wellington "Democracy Project", wrote that in light of Peters' comments, along with other "diplomatic smoke signals" including recent telephone conversations between Defence Minister Judith Collins and US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin, and Campbell with officials at New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, it is safe to conclude that whether or not it ultimately joins AUKUS, "A reshaping of New Zealand's foreign policy is also coming slowly but surely in other ways. ... Based on Peters' reference to the 'coming months', it now seems a near-certainty that New Zealand's ITPP will be finalised in time for Christopher Luxon to attend this year's NATO leaders' meeting in Washington DC in July."

Peters reportedly reiterated the previous government's line that NZ's ITPP agreement with NATO would, as the name implies, be tailored to NZ's specific wants and give due respect to its interests. The problem being that NATO has never been anything but a Trojan horse for Anglo-American co-optation of member states' armed forces and defence policies—designed, as its first Secretary-General Lord Ismay once said, to "Keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down" in western Europe. For the Asia-Pacific, simply replace "Russians" with "Chinese", and "Germans" with "everybody else".

I spy with my five little eyes

New Zealand's branch of the Five Eyes, meanwhile, has been caught once again at exactly the same kind of disloyalty Matt Robson called out in his remarks cited above— this time by the NZ government's own statutory watchdog. In a [25 March report](#) for investigative journalism website Consortium News, former Radio New Zealand editor Mick Hall—who was sacked last year for doing his job, by inserting confirmed facts for context in reports on the fighting in Ukraine—wrote that according to a report the previous week by NZ Inspector-General of Intelligence Brendan Horsley, "a signals intelligence system embedded in the country's Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) ran from 2012 to 2020 without ministerial knowledge or approval after a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in secret"—that is, without the knowledge or consent of the New Zealand government. "The GCSB is the equivalent of the GCHQ in Britain and the NSA in the US", Hall reported. "It collects, assesses and produces reports on foreign intelligence for other New Zealand agencies." According to Horsley's report, "an unnamed country"—assumed, but not confirmed, to be the USA—"had used the infrastructure to intercept and decode messages that could be used to support 'military actions by foreign partners'."

Hall wrote that whilst much of Horsley's report remains classified, even the public version "makes it clear there was very little oversight into how the suspected US signals operation was run and that it was impossible to determine whether it broke New Zealand law or that the intelligence enabled military targeting that broke international law. The system was accessed remotely by the [unnamed foreign] agency, with intercepted signals being passed on to it." Twenty-nine intelligence-gathering tasks are recorded between 2014 and 2020, but due to the lack of proper oversight "the true number performed is impossible to determine, ... [as is] the nature of the information gathering".

Horsley does however make very clear that "The senior staff working on signals intelligence system memos of understanding were aware of how politically significant it was and the potential legal implications it posed", Hall reported. "The inspector general's report said then-bureau director Simon Murdoch in 2011 had noted in an email that his legal team would need to be closely involved in the MoU process, as well as the minister with oversight of the GCSB being made aware of it, with his

consent also potentially needed. However, the report found no evidence of any subsequent ministerial briefings or correspondence.”

Hall wrote that GCSB is playing dumb, with the IG’s report “[noting] that Ian Fletcher, appointed GCSB director in February 2012, said he was not told about the MoU during his transition into his new role. The IG found no evidence Fletcher had been told. The report also said the GCSB’s current senior leadership and legal team had no knowledge of it either, suggesting institutional knowledge of the operation simply disappeared. ... It said the spy system was only ‘rediscovered’ following an audit in 2020 when equipment reportedly stopped working, after which the matter was referred to Horsley to probe.”

As Hall rightly notes, GCSB’s plea of ignorance is implausible on its face. It becomes even more so when one considers, as independent NZ journalist Suzie Dawson [reported](#) via Consortium News in January 2019, that NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden had revealed already in 2014 that the GCSB’s “full take”—New Zealand’s entire signals-intelligence capability—had been “fully integrated” into the USA’s global surveillance apparatus for several years before his departure. “He said that in order to access that information, he merely had to tick a check box which said ‘New Zealand’”, Dawson reported.

Instead of being cleaned out or shut down, however, the GSB is still running about spreading spurious scare stories about Chinese state-sponsored “hacking” of so-called democratic institutions. “The GCSB’s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) completed a robust technical assessment following a compromise of the Parliamentary Counsel Office and the Parliamentary Service in 2021, and has attributed this activity to a PRC [People’s Republic of China] state-sponsored group known as APT40”, Defence Minister Collins announced (probably not coincidentally) on 26 March, the day after Hall’s article began to circulate. His former employer RNZ, the official state broadcaster, helpfully added: “APT is a common term in cybersecurity for identifying groups carrying out attacks like this, and stands for Advanced Persistent Threat.” But it isn’t; in fact, an APT is merely a group of technical indicators that *may* indicate a common source—but which any high-end hacker can mimic to cover his tracks. Meanwhile the real state-sponsored “hacking” has been done right out in the open all along, by New Zealand’s “ally” the United States, and for 10 years no one in charge has had any excuse not to know it.

By Richard Bardon, Australian Alert Service, 10 April, 2024