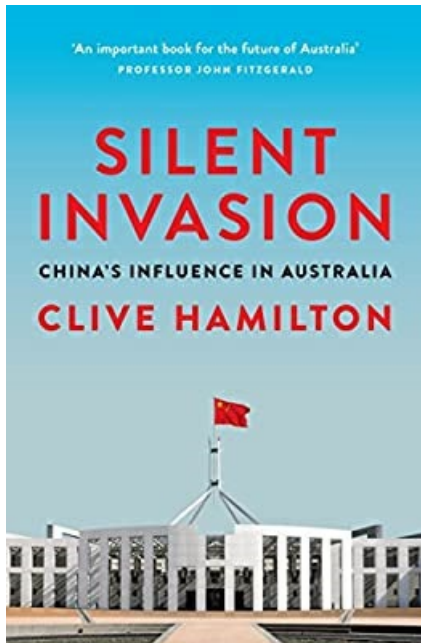


What constitutes foreign interference?

In 2018 the Australian government instituted its Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme, requiring anyone representing a foreign “principal” to register certain activities with the government. The government legislated the scheme in response to claimed “concerns” about Chinese foreign interference in Australia. Prominent among those expressing such concerns were the security service ASIO; academic and author of *Silent Invasion* Clive Hamilton; and Liberal MP Andrew Hastie, who chaired the parliamentary inquiry that recommended the scheme. “During its inquiry, the Committee received compelling evidence that Australia is facing an unprecedented threat from espionage and foreign interference, and that current laws are not adequate to deal with this threat”, Mr Hastie said in a 7 June 2018 statement.



Clive Hamilton’s book seeks to whip up fear not just of China, but of Chinese people in Australia, 40 per cent of whom he accuses of being “loyal” to Beijing, without any evidence whatsoever. When challenged how he arrived at this figure, Hamilton called it an “educated guess”. He was assisted in researching this book by Alex Joske, who works at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute funded by the US State Department.

China is accused, *ad nauseam*, of foreign interference through political donations, computer hacking, influence over universities, and the secretive loyalty of a large percentage of Australia’s ethnic Chinese community. The AAS and Citizens Party has examined these allegations closely and found them to be either baseless—especially the McCarthyite insinuations against Chinese-Australians—or little different to what all countries have always done, including through “soft power” to promote friendly relations.

There’s an important point about the activities China is accused of that even vicious Sinophobe Peter Hartcher acknowledged in the 23 November 2019 *Sydney Morning Herald*: the alleged foreign interference by China is “not intended to be malicious” but is “defensive”. Hartcher quoted Samantha Hoffman of the equally Sinophobic Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) saying China’s “priority is to pre-empt all perceived threats to state security”. This is an admission, in other words, that China isn’t trying to overthrow the government or political system of Australia, or that of the USA, or UK; China is guarding against efforts by *our* countries to overthrow *its* system. That’s a crucial difference between China and the Anglo-Americans, because while China doesn’t have state-backed organisations dedicated to overthrowing other countries, the Anglo-American powers do, and China is their major target, alongside Russia. And due to the regime-change wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria, the Anglo-American allies have proven to China, Russia and the world that they are indeed, as former Australian Prime Minister Malcom Fraser described them, “dangerous”.

Australia is seen as so loyal to the USA and UK it is taken for granted that we will always be there in the hot phase of Anglo-American regime-change operations, i.e. the wars. Yet how is Australia’s loyalty assured, including in a scenario of a war, not against a Middle East country which has very little effect on us, but against our largest trading partner China? It’s not as if all Australians are blindly loyal to the Anglo-Americans; in fact, as seen in the public backlash to notorious wars like Vietnam and Iraq, many Australians are hostile. How does the pro-Anglo-American establishment ensure that the calls of the likes of Malcom Fraser no less, a former PM, for Australia to break its alliance with and strategic dependence on the USA and UK and forge a truly independent foreign policy, are not successful?

Australia has always been a target of foreign interference, not as much by the likes of China, but by the UK and USA. Following are some examples:

- The British Security Service MI5 in 1949 ran an operation to force the Australian government to establish ASIO as a permanent domestic surveillance agency, effectively the Australian branch of MI5, against Prime Minister Ben Chifley's wishes, bringing Australia under the control of what is now known as the Five Eyes;
- Both MI6 and the CIA had a hand in the 1975 dismissal of the Whitlam government, which the Five Eyes apparatus regarded as a threat, [as documented by Australian investigative journalist John Pilger](#)—"We knew MI6 was bugging Cabinet meetings for the Americans", Whitlam minister Clyde Cameron told Pilger;
- Military interoperability—in a [21 May 2014 speech at ANU](#) Malcolm Fraser stated that following the end of the Cold War, in which our alliance with the Anglo-Americans was justified, "instead of exercising a greater degree of strategic independence ... we've become more closely enmeshed with the American military machine than ever before"—as we have with the UK military;
- The Australian-American Leadership Dialogue initiated in 1992 has forged a generation of Australian politicians committed to Anglo-American geopolitical strategy, a process former [PM Paul Keating described on ABC 7.30 on 11 November 2016](#), comparing the Dialogue to a "cult" from which events he noticed his colleagues would return "bowing and scraping" to US interests;
- The viciously anti-China ASPI, which constantly accuses China of every possible crime, including hacking the 2016 census—later proved false—and whose personnel helped to "research" Clive Hamilton's McCarthyite Silent Invasion book, is funded by the US State Department and by giant US weapons manufacturers which profit from the wars ASPI promotes;
- The Five Eyes "deep state" apparatus dominated by US and British intelligence now virtually dictate security and foreign policy, as evident in the Five Eyes campaign against Chinese communications company Huawei;
- The British Henry Jackson Society (HJS), representing the Anglo-American regime-change machine that is squarely aimed at China, including the US National Endowment for Democracy formed in the 1980s to fund destabilisation operations against foreign governments that the CIA previously funded, has acquired a powerful mouthpiece in Andrew Hastie, chair of the intelligence committee and the most bellicose China-hater in Parliament—ironically, Hastie isn't required to register his HJS relationship with the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme because Members of Parliament are exempt.

In his book *Dangerous Allies*, Malcolm Fraser observed that Australia has never been independent, but always subservient to the UK and USA, hence why the above examples are not seen as foreign interference. A truly independent Australia wouldn't suddenly turn on America as an enemy, far from it, but neither would it fear countries like China. Such independence would position Australia to be able to encourage peace between the two powers, rather than be used as an Anglo-American tool to promote war.

By Robert Barwick, Australian Alert Service, 27 May 2020