Do you trust intelligence agencies?



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Paul Keating's remarks slamming Australia's security agencies are spot on the mark. Calling for a clean-out of the spy outfits, which have "lost their strategic bearings" when it comes to China, the former Prime Minister declared that "When the security agencies are running foreign policy, the nutters are in charge".

Keating was commenting on the takeover of foreign policy by ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation), a branch office of Britain's MI5 since its inception. He's not the first to raise the matter, particularly when it comes to the demonisation of China. Former government official under Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser, John Menadue, has said that ASIO is pretty much running our China policy, briefing journalists regularly on the so-called "China threat". Chinese thinkers have also hypothesised that the "intelligence agencies are dominating the policy-making process" since the Malcolm Turnbull government, ANU senior lecturer Feng Zhang told the Australian Financial Review on 7 May. Keating traced the shift to a classified report China expert John Garnaut prepared for Turnbull in cooperation with ASIO.

In 2017, Turnbull had announced a new Department of Home Affairs modelled on the UK Home Office, empowering ASIO with more direct influence over security policy and law enforcement. A review of Australia's intelligence community was conducted to establish the super-ministry, overseeing and coordinating all security operations of ASIO; the Australian Federal Police; the Australian Border Force; the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission; the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC); and the Office of Transport Security. The Office of National Intelligence was later established, reporting directly to the Prime Minister in its role of coordinating all intelligence assessments from Australia's five spy agencies.

What they are in fact identifying, is that ASIO is the Trojan horse for the US and UK to control our foreign policy, as ASIO operates under the "Five Eyes". In 2018, Five Eyes leaders, representing the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, accelerated their anti-China campaign. They held secret meetings to coordinate the campaign to lock Chinese telco Huawei out of participation in 5G network development globally; a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) cyber security pact was signed in April; new foreign interference laws were coordinated; and the August 2018 Five Eyes summit on Australia's Gold Coast pushed for a global police-state capability under a new "transnational model of security", with increased intelligence agency control over internet content. Within less than 20 days of the March 2019 Christchurch attack, Prime Minister Scott Morrison had passed new internet censorship legislation in complete secrecy.

"Our security agencies have prevented 15 terrorist attacks in Australia", said Morrison, rebuking Keating's remarks, "... saving lives in this country". But numerous cases have been documented where ASIO was well aware of terrorist threats that it either did nothing to prevent, or encouraged. ASIO whistleblower Mamdouh Habib, an Australian held in detention without charge at Guantanamo Bay, has revealed that ASIO is constantly provoking the Muslim community to trigger events which it can then react to, including in the case of the Sydney Siege. In the UK, all of the recent perpetrators of terrorist attacks were either well known to intelligence agencies or were their actual agents. Terrorism is a pretext for increasing the power of unelected agencies over the population through police state laws. With a new oncoming financial crisis, we either accept this fate, or we adopt a new economic approach featuring Glass-Steagall banking separation and national credit investment, which drives China's success.

As Keating advised, "whatever you think, China is a great state ... soon [to be] the largest economy in the world. If we have a foreign policy that does not take that into account, we are fools." Australia needs to recognise China as legitimate, rather than as having sinister motives for raising millions out of poverty. We would then see the potential for cooperative economic development that we currently miss.

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Printed from http://citizensparty.org.au/print/pdf/node/358, on 29 Mar 2024 at 09:03 pm