

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5996>



New Zealand

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

- IV Online magazine - 2019 - IV530 - March 2019 -

Publication date: Friday 22 March 2019

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

You've heard the news: on March 15th, 2019, Aotearoa/New Zealand experienced its largest mass shooting since the colonial massacres, a coordinated terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch. Throughout the day the death toll climbed; first 6, then 27, then 40, and finally 49 (with more passing away in hospital beds in the ensuing days). Victims included resettled Syrian children, fleeing terrorism in one place only to encounter it in another.

In the aftermath, many said "This is not Aotearoa." However, while the attack may not have represented Aotearoa, it did represent the ugly underbelly of white New Zealand. [1] We cannot simply blame the involvement of an Australian - for one thing, Christchurch has long been the city where the far right is strongest in this country. Although the attack is unprecedented, it did not come out of nowhere.

When T?hoe M?ori activist Tame Iti noted the legacy of colonial violence which this attack echoed, [2] many in comment threads called this 'segregation' or 'divisiveness.' However, if we don't identify the roots of racist violence, it will only happen again and again.

We will examine four factors that should be considered in comprehending the incomprehensible;

- 1) The history of far-right groups in Aotearoa/New Zealand,
- 2) The alt-right internet's incubating role,
- 3) Activist-left complicity in Islamophobia and
- 4) Complicity of the coalition government parties. We must "clean house" if we are to stop this from ever happening again.

Always present: NZ's far right in history

The savagery and scale of the attacks in Christchurch are without a doubt unprecedented in recent New Zealand history. Attempts to reach for a comparison must go as far back as the 1943 Featherston POW massacre, the 1918 Surafend massacre, or further still to the 19th century colonial wars. [3] However, whether the motivations and violent nature of these attacks are unprecedented in New Zealand is another matter entirely.

Research on New Zealand's far right is scarce, but what does exist puts the immediate lie to claims by the likes of Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel and National Party MP Gerry Brownlee that white supremacy has not been a problem in Christchurch (or, by extension, New Zealand). The origins of New Zealand's far right as an organized force lie with the emergence of racial exclusion leagues over the 1880s to 1920s, and the development of interlocking immigration laws which became known as the White New Zealand Policy.

While the origins of white supremacy lie with the confiscation of M?ori land and the bitter wars of the mid-19th century, its cohesion as a conscious doctrine originates in the fears of immigration eroding said power towards the

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

end of the century. The early exclusionary leagues acted as relatively simple lobbying groups and utilized entirely legal means to further their aims, which in practice acted to reinforce and extend an increasingly whites-only border policy. Through the 1880s to 1900s groups with names like White Race League, Anti-Asiatic League, and Anti-Chinese League began to appear; generally garnering popular support. [4] At the same time, the lattice of immigration law which upheld the White New Zealand Policy started to be enacted.

A non-exhaustive list of that legislation includes:

? Restrictions on non-British gum diggers in 1898, 1908, and 1910; specifically aimed at Dalmatian (sometimes referred to as Croatian, Yugoslav, or just Slav) labourers who had entered the industry.

? Undesirable Hawkers Prevention Bill 1896 which was aimed at Syrian and other Arab immigrants, while acting broadly as a roundabout way to slow immigration by non-white British subjects.

? Undesirable Immigrants Exclusion Act 1919 placing special requirements on immigrants from the former German and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

? Immigration Restriction Act 1899 which acted to impede all non-British immigration.

? Over two dozen pieces of legislation aimed specifically at Chinese migrants. Poll tax increases in 1881, 1888, and 1896; naturalization bans in 1892, and 1908; additional language tests in 1907; and thumb printing in 1908 are among the most notable.

? Immigration Restriction Amendment Act 1920, which acted as the formalization of the White NZ Policy and functionally ended non-white immigration.

Immigration Restriction Amendment Act 1931, which severely impeded attempts by Jewish refugees from Europe attempting to enter New Zealand. [5]

These racial leagues and the immigration restrictions eventually created the atmosphere that resulted in the infamous murder of Joe Kum Yung, an elderly Chinese miner, on Haining Street in Wellington on 24th September 1905. The killer, Lionel Terry, was a relatively popular racist agitator of a British merchant family and military background who'd been promoting his manifesto/verse booklet *The Shadow* leading up to the murder. The murder shocked the country, but crucially had no effect in blunting the popularity of whites-only immigration to NZ and a great many continued to support him. [6]

This atmosphere also culminated not only in Yung's murder in 1905 and the formalization of the White NZ Policy by the Act passed in 1920, but also in the founding of the most notorious of the racial exclusion leagues, the White New Zealand League. While the politics of this league were functionally little different to earlier leagues, it was the most explicit about ensuring New Zealand be a white state. With the common belief that Māori were either a 'dying race' or destined to be assimilated into white NZ, this meant that like previous groups the White NZ League focused near exclusively on Asian immigration. [7] As a marker of the League's incredible popularity, through the mid-1920s it sent requests to 200 local bodies around NZ asking them to pass resolutions supporting the aims of the League. They received positive replies from 160 of these local bodies, representing some 670,000 people (about 47% of the population at the time). [8]

Anti-Semitism, while rarer than anti-Asian sentiment, was far from unheard of either. Within the Social Credit

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

movement in particular, which had strong support especially from the 'old petty-bourgeois' (rural small-landowners, typically farmers), anti-Semitism was rife in the 1930s. A survey of Social Credit publications from the 1930s-1980s by sociologist Paul Spoonley reveals a persistent slew of anti-Semitic content, even after the Social Credit Political League itself expelled its extreme right-wing in 1972. [9] Social Credit acted as a harbour for anti-Semitism until the post-war period from the 1950s onward, when the far right began to fully develop and new organisations appear.

A full chronology of all the organisations of the far right in New Zealand established since the 1950s would be fruitless. Suffice to say that from 1954 with the formation of a NZ wing of the British League of Empire Loyalists (primarily based in Auckland and Christchurch) through to his writing in 1987, Paul Spoonley recorded the formation of nearly 100 far right organisations in a 33-year period. [10] Plainly, many more have formed in the interim 32 years.

While none of these groups have managed to become a mass movement or electorally successful party, some have attained significant support. Organisations expressing solidarity with white rule in Southern Africa, particularly South Africa and Rhodesia, began to appear in the 1960s and grew rapidly over the coming years. [11] Meanwhile the League of Rights, cousin to the Australian group of the same name and a home for the extreme right exiled from the mainstream Social Credit party, garnered surprising success in spite of their notoriety as an anti-Semitic and virulently racist organization. After its 1971 formation the League had a stable membership and support base of around 200 people for the duration of the decade, which soared to at least 1000 in the early 1980s as a result of the 1981 Springbok Tour and the rapid social changes of the time. The League further established numerous front-groups and operated in coalition with more mainstream conservatives over issues like abortion and homosexual law reform, giving them access to the political mainstream and some hard-line MPs. Estimated yearly expenditure for the 1980s, primarily funded by large volumes of book & paper sales, was as high as \$50,000; a figure packed up by the publication of massive numbers of pamphlets, such as 250,000 copies of one titled *New Zealand First* in 1981. [12]

From the 1960s onward an openly fascist wing of New Zealand's far right began to operate, sometimes trailing into violence (National Socialist Party founder Colin King-Ansell was convicted of firebombing a synagogue in 1967). This fed in later years into the rise of often violent white power gangs in the 1990s which declined but persisted into the 2000s. [13] Arguably the most notorious, the Fourth Reich gang attracted national horror when a number of partially-ideologically motivated murders occurred after its expansion from a prison gang into a number of South Island centres in the late 1990s. Members were responsible for the murders of Hemi Hutley, James Bambrough, and Jae Hyeon Kim (and possibly more) in and around Westport from 1997-2003; Hutley and Kim for their race, and Bambrough for his sexuality. [14]

Kyle Chapman, arguably New Zealand's most notorious contemporary neo-Nazi, confessed to numerous race-related attacks on Māori people including firebombing a marae in Invercargill in the early 1990s. After confessing and 'leaving' the scene in the mid-1990s Chapman led a trust in Christchurch where he was tasked with steering skinhead youth away from the white power movement, which ended when he was discovered to be using his position to distribute neo-fascist material to his wards. [15]

Chapman would go on to lead the National Front in the 2000s at a time when their supporters vandalized Jewish graves and attacked immigrants in Wellington, and later founded Right Wing Resistance which operated in Christchurch in the early years of this decade. Other stalwarts of the movement like Colin King-Ansell and Kerry Bolton (who was a member of the National Socialist Party in his teenage years, going on to be a leader in numerous neo-fascist organisations) are still active today, like the rump of the white power scene in the 1990s.

Though only a few instances of fascist terror have been elaborated here, historically New Zealand has had a demonstrably active far right subculture which has always bubbled not too far below the surface. And while it has

never managed to attain mainstream success or political power in New Zealand, it has often hovered alarmingly close to that political mainstream or launched sporadic and opportunistic acts of violence from the fringe.

Internet's incubating role: The writing on the guns, and New Zealand's alt-right

Before he began his shooting spree, the Christchurch terrorist shared photos of his weapons on his (now deleted) Twitter account. On the guns used in the massacre he had written the names of other mass shooters, as well the phrase "14 words" a reference to the fourteen-word slogan "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children," a statement attributed to American David Lane, founder of the white supremacist terrorist organisation The Order.

On another gun he had written "here's your migration compact!" a reference to the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. This compact is a non-binding agreement around migration that was developed in the aftermath of the 2015 refugee crisis following the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which was unanimously supported by all UN member states in September 2016.

The compact, relatively benign as well as non-binding, would likely have also been supported by all member states, if not for what happened next.

Beginning in September 2018, the far-right began to spread distorted information, conspiracy theories and outright falsehoods about the pact. According to Laurens Cerulus and Eline Schaart, writing for Politico (see "How the UN Migration pact got trolled"): [\[16\]](#)

The burst of activity, including tweets, videos and online petitions, prompted politicians in several countries to take notice of the previously uncontroversial pact and revise their views. In Belgium, the controversy led to the collapse of the government.

The rapid move from online activity to political reality is an example of how a process can be hijacked by what researchers describe as a global network of nationalist, far-right activists. In this case the efforts were spearheaded by popular YouTubers and political "influencers" such as Austrian far-right activist Martin Sellner, then coordinated via chat groups and hyper-partisan websites."

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), which monitors extremism, analysed the 100 most popular YouTube videos about the migration pact and found that 75 were created by people that they had classified as right populist, anti-migration campaigners, far-right extremists or conspiracy theorists. This online network of hard-right content creators, along with far-right members of parliaments were able to sway several European countries to vote against approving the compact, along with the US, Israel and Australia.

New Zealand was not left out from the global right-wing backlash against the compact. While her own YouTube video, entitled "WAKE UP NEW ZEALAND' BY Carol Sakey -MUSLIM WORLD, NZ'S OPEN BORDERS. [\[17\]](#)" was nowhere near popular enough to be among the sample analysed by ISD, the parliamentary petition Carol Sakey started did gain some traction. The petition was shared by local right wing Facebook pages such as South Island Independence Movement, run by Timaru based Solomon Tors-Kilsen, who self-identified as alt-right when questioned by the New Zealand Herald's Kirsty Johnson for her July 2017 investigative report on New Zealand's far right [\[18\]](#) and One Nation NZ, the party founded by former New Zealand First candidate Kym Koloni to contest the

Northcote parliamentary by-election in 2018.

In the hours following the shooting in Christchurch, the One Nation NZ Facebook page disappeared. It's unclear whether it was removed by Facebook or whether it was pre-emptively taken down by Koloni (or someone else in the organisation). The page frequently shared articles fear mongering about Islam and immigration.

A bigger player in New Zealand's far right social media ecosystem, however, is the larger and -relatively speaking- more moderate New Conservative party. The New Conservatives, who trace their origins to the Conservative Party founded by disgraced millionaire Colin Craig, have rebuilt the party as a less Christianity orientated but more conservative organisation. They are a registered party, meaning they will be on the ballot at the 2020 election, and occasionally show up in polls at around 1% of the vote.

The party has been able punch above its weight, Deputy Leader Elliot Ikilei has been a semi-frequent guest on TVNZ's Breakfast programme as well as the Radio Live and Newstalk ZB talk-radio networks. In a video about the UN Compact on Migration posted to his Facebook page on November 25th 2018 [19] Ikilei tells his audience:

Almost every sentence can be found in almost any or every sci-fi dystopia type thriller type movie type book. Almost every sentence is an incredibly dangerous clause, wish list, desire, and the fact that our leader, Winston Peters, I mean Jacinda Ardern, is all good to sign it, when other countries are aware of the absolute insidiousness of this document is just incredible.

Ikilei doesn't quote a single word from the document, but claims "this doesn't get any worse actually, this document, this is end game type of stuff...if you care about New Zealand, this document cannot be signed. This is the type of thing that we need to unite against, it is vicious"

He then thanks people who have sent him links and reviews, significantly he says "thank you also to the person who sent me Stefan Molyneux's take on it, I haven't watched it yet...I'm looking forward to watching that as well"

A Facebook follower posts a link to Molyneux's video in the comments, Ikilei and a few others like the comment. Molyneux is a Canadian white supremacist [20] who promotes discredited pseudoscience regarding the link between race and intelligence [21]. He came to New Zealand in 2018 as part of a speaking tour with Lauren Southern, another Canadian far-right activist. [22]

When the pair were barred from speaking at Auckland Council owned venues, Ikilei and the New Conservatives became some of their most vocal supporters. A July 7, 2018 press release [23] reads "New Conservative staunchly supports the free speech that has been occurring year after year after year at our Auckland Council venues, and utterly rejects the flawed attempt to label Lauren Southern and Stefan Molyneux as having views that are 'hate speech'."

Southern, it should be noted, has a small part in the story of the Christchurch shooting as well. In the Anglophone world, she has been one of the biggest proponents of the conspiracy theory known as "The Great Replacement" a term coined by French anti-immigration writer Renaud Camus to describe the "replacement" of Europeans by non-white immigrants.

The Great Replacement narrative influenced protesters at the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia who chanted "Jews will not replace us!" and it influenced the Christchurch shooter, who titled his rambling manifesto "The Great Replacement" and wrote that "Millions of people [are] pouring across our borders ... [i]nvited by the state

and corporate entities to replace the White people who have failed to reproduce" [\[24\]](#)

In the hours following the shooting, Southern's YouTube video "The Great Replacement" appeared to have been removed from the internet [\[25\]](#), though at the time of writing it is online. [\[26\]](#)

A December 5th, 2018 Facebook post on the New Conservative NZ page promoting a rally against the Migration Compact states:

We were the first political party to publicly stand staunchly opposed to signing the UN migration pact. We were the first political party to publicly stand against the restrictions on free speech earlier this year, and we were on TV, radio, debates with a consistent and clear message about free speech and sovereignty. [\[27\]](#)

It was through that mix of social and traditional media coverage that New Conservative was able to take the narrative on the Migration Compact that originated on the far-right conspiracy theory parts of YouTube, and inject it into mainstream political discourse.

On December 4th the mainstream conservative National Party announced it would oppose voting for the compact and pull New Zealand out of it if elected in 2020:

The Government appears to be relying on the UN to set its migration policy rather than making its own decisions. While a number of countries are pulling out of the agreement as the extent of its potential impact on the decision-making of individual countries is realised, our Government is refusing to outline its own position. For these reasons, National will not be supporting this agreement and we will reverse the decision if this Government signs up to it. [\[28\]](#)

Gerry Brownlee told Newshub that the migration compact would result in "pretty much open borders". [\[29\]](#) Opposition to the UN pact was no longer confined to fringe far right groups but had become the policy of New Zealand's main opposition party.

As he opened his interview with Foreign Minister Winston Peters on December 20, 2018 Newstalk ZB host Mike Yardley stated "the [legal] advice says that it will not compromise sovereignty nor is it legally binding, but there are still a lot of people worried about implications". [\[30\]](#) Peters, a man who it should be said has built much of his political career on anti-immigration populism, noted that the National Party had supported the compact when in government, and that the debate around it started "all of a sudden because of the alt-right and a few uninformed people...I can't have you on national radio...repeating this uninformed drive!!"

But by then it was too late, the meme had already spread. It didn't matter that it wasn't true, people believed it was true, or felt they could win the votes of people who believed it was true. The National Party even went so far as to create its own petition, encouraging their supporters to "to stand with National and stop this Govt from signing NZ up to this agreement".

While the Migration Compact was signed in December, National had left the petition up on their website. That is, until they took it down- some time on the afternoon of March 15th. A copy of the page from Google's cache is still accessible, the most recently available snapshot is from the 15th, 1:39pm New Zealand time. Archived just around the time New Zealand was starting to come to terms with the fact that we had just experienced our first alt-right terrorist attack. [\[31\]](#)

Islamophobia and the Left

The mainstream Right in New Zealand bears most of the responsibility for refusing to combat the spread of white-supremacist, Islamophobic, and migrant-baiting ideas, or even exploiting them for electoral advantage. We rightly mock conservative politicians and media figures shedding crocodile tears over 51 dead Muslims. But sadly, these ideas have not been absent from the activist and radical Left in this country either.

A diagram on the first page of the Nazi murderer's manifesto (apparently taken from the defunct US fascist group, the Traditionalist Workers Party) lists "anti-imperialism", "environmentalism" and "workers' rights" among his principles, and the murderer later equivocates on whether he would describe himself as a "socialist". This has been enough to allow some of the more extreme Right US websites to try to categorise him as actually far-left. [32] But it is in fact just the latest example of the phenomenon of **red-brown politics** - fascism adopting left-wing slogans as "camouflage", which sadly intersects with sections of the activist Left passively or actively going along with conservative-populist ideas. Fightback has previously warned of the massive dangers of an unwitting convergence between "Conservative Leftism" and the Red-Brown movement, allowing fascist ideas to circulate within our own movement. [33]

Martyn Bradbury, proprietor of the prominent centre-left Daily Blog, was quick to come out on social media with "FUCK ISLAMOPHOBIA" after the massacre. This is exactly the same Martyn Bradbury who less than two years ago wrote: "The impact of the Asian-NZ population tripling in the space of 20 years and overtaking Māori has political, economic and cultural ramifications that haven't been discussed yet it's a debate that is already running." [34]

In New Zealand discourse, "Asian" generally refers to East Asian (mainly ethnically Chinese) people, rather than from the Indian Subcontinent or the Middle East. But Bradbury's fretting about "invasion" and "colonisation" by migrants only differs from the paranoid rambling in the Christchurch Nazi murderer's manifesto by which ethnic group of migrants in particular he is disturbed by. If your only difference from Nazis is in which ethnicity you suspect of being a fifth column stealing the country from within, you should be excluded from the Left. The parallel with European colonisation is also dubious, given that Europeans showed up with guns, continue to own most of the property and now presume to regulate new arrivals.

The fact that Syrian refugees were among the dead adds an extra layer of irony to the participation in the outpouring of grief, rage and activism by some activist Leftists who follow a "campist" politics of identifying the USA and its client states as the main source of wickedness in the world, and apologising for or denying the imperialist ventures of Russia, China and their own client states. [35] All people with basic human decency in Aotearoa would be disgusted at the gabbling of the US conspiracy theorists who claim that the mosque murders were a "false flag" designed to justify some nefarious State plot. And yet, parts of the activist Left here in New Zealand have resorted to similar "false flag" conspiracy theories when confronted with tragedies with politically inconvenient consequences - for example, in reaction to the Assad regime's chemical attacks in Douma, Syria, in April 2018 which killed at least 70 people. [36]- Willingness to adopt conspiratorial explanations for tragedies, if they challenge our political presuppositions, puts us in danger of a slide into reactionary ideologies. It is worrying that few other activists thought that this was at all a shocking or outrageous thing to say regarding the Douma attacks; many supported the statement.

The genius of both the Russian and Chinese state-backed propaganda networks has been to recycle Western "war on terror" propaganda, demonizing Muslims as terrorists and subversives, into an anti-imperialist framework which makes it acceptable to Left-wing opinion in the West. This propaganda narrative combines Western post-9/11 Islamophobia with the older narrative that Islamist resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was a creation of/funded by the West, rather than an indigenous movement.

Many Western Leftists have been sucked into repeating poisonous Islamophobia by accepting the story that every

resistance movement to Russia, China or their client states which resorts to Islamic imagery are CIA funded terrorists. In this way, the whole Syrian resistance, along with Uighurs in China or the Rohingya people in Myanmar/Burma, can be equated with actual terrorist movements such as ISIS/Da'esh and al-Qaeda. [37] Murderous dictators like Bashar al-Assad or Muammar Qadhafi can be upheld as victims of imperialism and as bulwarks of "secularism" against the jihadi menace.

It must be stated plainly - when New Zealand leftists (for example) refuse to condemn China's "re-education" camps for Uighurs, or repeat smears that 9-year old Syrian refugee Bana al-Abed's father is an ISIS operative, *they are promoting Islamophobia, whether they realise it or not*. In many parts of the world this kind of "ISIS-jacketing" is a death sentence for those smeared - like "snitch-jacketing" or "cop-jacketing" in the USA. Just like the Christchurch Nazi murderer, the Russian and Chinese states characterise Muslims as tools of a Western imperialist (or "globalist") conspiracy. Most of the New Zealand left has simply refused to debate these issues, characterising those who worry about them as sectarian obsessives. But anyone who rightly cries over 51 murdered in Christchurch while dismissing 70 murdered in Douma as a "false flag" is not showing internationalism. Campism is neither internationalism nor anti-imperialism; and supporting current Russian or Chinese foreign policy means aiding and abetting murderous Islamophobia.

The radical left must promote and listen to the voices of Syrians - as well as Arabs and Muslims generally, facing an international backlash that crosses the lines between geopolitical 'EurosÜcamps.' Resettled Syrians live in Aotearoa: this is not simply a distant geopolitical issue.

Ruling parties' complicity

To start on a positive note, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern correctly and surprisingly identified the Christchurch attack as 'terrorism.' This is unusual in an international context where white male terrorists are generally depicted as unhinged lone wolves, while Muslims and Arabs are 'terrorists' even before perpetrating any crime. It may be that the coordinated nature of this action made it harder for authorities to pretend it was an act of a lone wolf, but it's a refreshing acknowledgement all the same.

However, the Government and pro-Government parties - Labour, New Zealand First, and the Greens - share varying degrees of complicity with processes that led to this tragedy.

So-called 'anti-terrorism' efforts, under successive Labour-led and National-led governments, focused on seemingly everyone *but* the far right. It's no surprise that the Christchurch terrorists were on "nobody's radar" in Australia or New Zealand, [38] despite the rapid expansion of the surveillance state in the 21st century. In 10 years of Security Intelligence Service (SIS) and Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) public documents there was no mention of far-right groups. [39] The list of NZ-designated 'terror' groups includes no far-right groups, and a number of legitimate resistance groups such as the Kurdish PKK. [40]

In 2002, the Labour government passed the 'Terrorism Suppression Act', comparable with the US Patriot Act, which saw state overreach in the wake of 9/11. [41] It's worth noting here that white men are the most common perpetrators of terrorism in the USA despite the outsize focus on Muslims, and there have been no Islamist attacks in Aotearoa at all. [42]

As in so many countries, Muslim and Arab communities experienced profiling. As highlighted by Faisal al-Asaad in a piece for *Overland* entitled "Today we mourn, tomorrow we organise":

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

I'll never forget the many meetings and roundtables I attended, alongside other Muslim advocates and leaders, where we argued and pleaded, pointlessly it seems, with different government agencies to turn their attention from our communities and mosques to the real threats in this country. I'll never forget the empty reassurances, let alone the smirking faces as someone dismissively joked, in reference to the far right and white supremacists in New Zealand: 'It's hard to take these guys seriously.'...

Today we need to grieve and mourn, so let's do whatever we can to support each other and, most importantly, the immediate victims of yesterday's atrocity. But tomorrow, we need to ask some hard questions and hold people to account for the sheer horror they enabled. [\[43\]](#)

The state also harassed Māori and left-wing activists. The most well-known application of the New Zealand state's post-9/11 powers were the 2007 'terror raids', in which anarchist and Māori activists were rounded up across the country. [\[44\]](#) Police shut down the rural, predominantly Māori town of Ruatoki, with armed officers reportedly boarding school buses full of children. [\[45\]](#)

Just this year, a Department of Corrections plan to fight terrorism identified "Māori nationalist groups" as a special threat, earning a rebuke from Māori Labour Party MP Kelvin Davis [\[46\]](#)

In 2004, sources revealed that the SIS were investigating the newly formed Māori Party, a parliamentary party unlikely to be planting any bombs. [\[47\]](#) Meanwhile, the same year saw National Front members knock down Jewish gravestones, [\[48\]](#) and thousands of ordinary people protest against a combined march of the National Front and Destiny Church, including a student strike. [\[49\]](#)

It's been left to small anti-fascist groups, lacking the resources of the surveillance state, to monitor the activities of fascists on a voluntary basis, with occasional outbursts of popular counter-protest against fascist mobilisations.

Ultimately, the complacency of the political class has allowed fascism to fester and turn septic. In the unlikely event they changed course and cracked down on far-right groups, we may not trust the surveillance state, but we certainly would not cry for the fascists.

In addition to their lopsided 'anti-terrorism' letting the far right off the hook, the ruling parties have also engaged in populist migrant-bashing.

New Zealand First, Labour's coalition partner, is particularly infamous for migrant-bashing. We should be wary of simplistically labelling NZF leader Winston Peters 'New Zealand's Trump', as some international commentators have. [\[50\]](#) Rather than a billionaire populist entering politics in a time of crisis, he is a long-term member of the political class who plays to an older conservative audience. Peters is also Māori, and has a significant rural Māori base, making it difficult to directly map the US situation onto NZ. We have pointed out in the past that Peters emerged from the "Muldoonist" faction of the National Party - anti-neoliberal and socially conservative, in the tradition of 1970s Prime Minister Robert Muldoon - and that a lowest common denominator anti-neoliberalism has led some on the broad left to work with Peters. [\[51\]](#)

However, none of that stops Peters pandering to fascists, or creating an atmosphere conducive to fascism. In 2005, the neo-Nazi National Front endorsed New Zealand First. [\[52\]](#) During the 2017 election, Peters posed with a picture of Pepe (a cartoon frog adopted as an alt-right mascot) at a student event, and defended the "European Students' Association", a front for white nationalists. [\[53\]](#)

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

Since the formation of NZF in 1993, Peters has pressed anti-migrant buttons too many times to count. In a grimly relevant example, Peters called for New Zealand Muslims to "clean house" and turn in any extremists after the 2007 London terror attacks. [54] We await calls from the ruling coalition for white or Christian communities to "clean house" in response to the events of March 15th.

Labour has also engaged in its own migrant-bashing. In the 2017 election, party leader Andrew Little called for cutting "tens of thousands" of migrants, a position Ardern did not reverse. [55] Infamously in 2015, Labour MP Phil Twyford highlighted the "Chinese surnames" of Auckland home buyers, not distinguishing between international buyers and citizens. [56]

Of all the parties in the ruling coalition, the Greens have by far the best record, for example opposing the abuse of surveillance powers, and introducing New Zealand's first refugee-background MP to parliament. [57] However, even the Greens have engaged in their own migrant-bashing at times: current co-leader James Shaw controversially advocated capping migration at 1% of the population [58], a policy that was based on "statistical nonsense." [59] Fortunately, James Shaw later retracted this statement and apologised to the Federation of Multicultural Councils, after criticism both inside and outside the party. [60]

We support attempts by Labour and Green members to challenge anti-migrant politics in their parties (although Winston Peters seems singularly unlikely to recant). Unfortunately, many on the broad left look the other way when these parties engage in migrant-bashing, or actively defend them against criticism. In the 2017 General Election, Fightback did not endorse any party, instead helping launch the Migrant and Refugee Rights Campaign (MARRC) to challenge populist migrant-bashing across the political spectrum. [61] MARRC spokesperson Gayaal Iddamalgoda had this to say at the Wellington vigil on March 17th this year, honouring the dead of Christchurch:

I have so many questions, hard questions that I think need to be answered by all of us..

Why was our Secret Service busy surveilling our innocent Muslim neighbours and not the extremists who sought to victimise them?

Why have the Police in this city spent more than a \$100,000 of taxpayers' money to attack peace activists protesting weapons conferences and arms dealers, while letting racist terrorists acquire semi-automatic weapons?

When will Politicians left and right own up to the fact that they have for years scapegoated and blamed migrants and refugees for social and economic problems that they are not responsible for?

And when will they admit while they have been doing this they have allowed unspeakable hatred to brew under their noses?

I want answers, I want accountability and I want something to change, but right now while I wait for these answers I want to do something to cancel out the hateful paranoid vision of these extremists and offer instead a vision of hope. [62]

Fortunately, hundreds have attended anti-fascist demonstrations in recent years (since the peak of 2004), and thousands have attended solidarity demonstrations with Christchurch. While we can and should press the ruling parties to do better, we ultimately cannot rely on them, and must mobilise ourselves to stop creeping fascism directly.

In the days following the attack, Milo Yiannopolous was banned from Australia, venues reversed course on hosting a

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

musician with a Nazi past, and Newshub announced they would not tolerate hate speech on their Facebook page. Let's do everything in our power to ensure this state of affairs is permanent, rather than being a passing stage of grief.

Thanks to Cam Walker for help with research on 'anti-terror' policy.

Recommended:

? [Hear their words: Muslim voices on the Christchurch attacks, The Spinoff](#)

? [Victim support official page, givealittle](#)

[Fightback](#)

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of *International Viewpoint*. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.

[1] Aotearoa ("land of the long white cloud") is an indigenous name for these islands; we distinguish it from "New Zealand", the colonial-settler state founded by the British Empire here.

[2] https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12213575 class='spip_url spip_out' rel='external'><https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/...>

[3] In the first 48 Japanese internees in a prisoner of war camp were killed [see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Featherston_prisoner_of_war_camp](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Featherston_prisoner_of_war_camp) The later was a massacre by Anzac troops in Palestine [see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surafend_affair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surafend_affair)

[4] Paul Spoonley, *The Politics of Nostalgia: racism and the extreme right in New Zealand*, (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1987), 52.

[5] A short but adequate summary of these restrictions can be found on Te Ara Encyclopaedia, but more extensive analysis can be found in the PhD thesis *The making of the White New Zealand policy* by Phil Ferguson. Ann Beaglehole, "Immigration Regulation," Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, 18th August 2015, accessed 20th March 2019, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/immigration-regulation>; Phil Ferguson, "The making of the White New Zealand policy: Nationalism, citizenship and the exclusion of the Chinese, 1880-1920" (PhD, University of Canterbury, 2003), <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/4589>

[6] Again, the Te Ara biography is more than adequate, however its author Frank Tod also wrote the book length biography of Lionel Terry which is the go-to for more in-depth reading. Frank Tod, "Terry, Edward Lionel," Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, first published in 1966, accessed 20th March 2019, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3t27/terry-edward-lionel>; Frank Tod, *Lionel Terry: The Making of a Madman*, (Dunedin: Otago Foundation Books, 1977)

[7] Angela Ballara, *Proud to be White? A Survey of Pakeha Prejudice in New Zealand*, (Auckland: Heinemann, 1986), 88-89.

[8] Spoonley, *The Politics of Nostalgia*, 52

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

[9] Ibid, 58-60, 291-296

[10] Ibid, 71-72, 299-308

[11] Ibid, 73

[12] Ibid, 109-119. \$50,000NZD in 1980 is roughly equal to \$250,000 NZD today.

[13] Ibid, 150-151. Jarrod Gilbert, Patched: The History of Gangs in New Zealand, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013), 142-144.

[14] Gilbert, Patched, 143-144. "West Coast communities held captive by fear," Stuff, 31st January 2009, accessed 20th March 2019, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/features/feature-archive/510082/West-Coast-communities-held-captive-by-fear>

[15] Gilbert, Patched, 144-145

[16] <https://www.politico.eu/article/united-nations-migration-pact-how-got-trolled>.

[17] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFByD3rGIMY>

[18] https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11888810

[19] <https://bit.ly/2Y27jdQ>

[20] https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Stefan_Molyneux

[21] <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/02/the-unwelcome-revival-of-race-science>

[22] https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Lauren_Southern.

[23] <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO1807/S00097/a-line-has-been-crossed.htm>

[24] christchurch-brenton-tarrant-renaud-camus-jean-raspail-identitarians-white-nationalism/" class='spip_out' rel='external'><https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/16/the-inspiration-for-terrorism-in-new-zealand-came-from-france-christchurch-brenton-tarrant-renaud-camus-jean-raspail-identitarians-white-nationalism/>

[25] https://twitter.com/shaun_jen/status/1106515317063331840

[26] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTDmsmN43NA>

[27] <https://bit.ly/2TWRsxK>.

[28] https://www.national.org.nz/national_would_pull_nz_out_of_un_migration_pact

[29] <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2018/12/migration-pact-will-result-in-pretty-much-open-borders-brownlee.html>

[30] <https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/mike-hosking-breakfast/audio/winston-peters-peters-blames-alt-right-for-un-migration-pact-criticism/>

[31] <https://bit.ly/2HrO73W>. Since then, National Party leader Simon Bridges has claimed that the petition was taken down by an "emotional junior staffer". https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12214180

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

[32] For example, Natural News <https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/NaturalNews>

[33] See <https://fightback.org.nz/2016/02/15/against-conservative-leftism/> and <https://fightback.org.nz/2018/05/09/the-red-brown-zombie-plague-part-one/>

[34] <https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2017/10/05/waateanews-how-do-M?ori-respond-to-the-next-wave-of-colonisation>

[35] <https://fightback.org.nz/2015/11/05/against-campism-what-makes-some-leftists-support-putin/>.

[36] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douma_chemical_attack. See the report from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons: <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2019/03/opcw-issues-fact-finding-mission-report> chemical-weapons-use-allegation

[37] In fact, it was the Assad regime itself which cynically promoted Islamist terrorism to divide the opposition forces, by releasing from prison at the start of the uprising many of those who went on to become leaders of ISIS or other jihadi groups.

<https://www.newsweek.com/how-syrias-assad-helped-forge-isis-255631->

[38] <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/on-nobody-s-radar-anywhere-terrorist-escaped-australian-authorities-20190316-p514rw.html>

[39] <https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/385173/no-mention-of-right-wing-extremist-threats-in-10-years-of-gcsb-and-sis-public-docs>

[40] <https://www.police.govt.nz/advice/personal-community/counterterrorism/designated-entities/lists-associated-with-resolution-1373>.

[41] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism_Suppression_Act_2002

[42] <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/10/2/16396612/las-vegas-mass-shooting-terrorism-islam>.

[43] <https://overland.org.au/2019/03/today-we-mourn-tomorrow-we-organise/>

[44] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_New_Zealand_police_raids.

[45] <https://www.webcitation.org/5Skemn9el?url=http://www.stuff.co.nz/4243621a10.html>

[46] https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=1220449.

[47] <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0411/S00144.htm>.

[48] <https://www.theage.com.au/world/jewish-graves-vandalised-in-nz-20040807-gdyeuy.html>.

[49] <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0408/S00249.htm>.

[50] https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11925795.

[51] <https://fightback.org.nz/2018/11/01/new-zealand-first-and-the-global-far-right/>.

[52] https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10343503.

[53]

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2018/10/opinion-whistling-on-migration-yet-leaving-migration-high-what-s-winston-peters-playing-at.html>.

[54] https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11870566.

Christchurch terror: How did this happen?

[55] https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11841890

[56] <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/money/70155168/null>.

[57] <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/election/2017/10/golriz-ghahraman-nz-s-first-refugee-mp-in-parliament.html>.

[58] <https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/315879/greens-would-cap-migration-at-1-percent-of-population>.

[59]

<https://fightback.org.nz/2016/10/22/green-vomit-and-statistical-nonsense-the-lies-you-hear-about-immigration-and-the-auckland-housing-crisis/>.

[60] <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2017/07/james-shaw-sorry-after-immigration-policy-slammed-as-racist.html>.

[61] <https://fightback.org.nz/2017/10/20/racial-populism-and-the-2017-new-zealand-general-election/>.

[62] <https://vimeo.com/324771849>.