

Hillary Clinton demands Australia and New Zealand act against “Chinese interference”

Mike Head
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During appearances in Auckland, Melbourne and Sydney last week, failed US Democratic Party presidential candidate and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton insisted that the governments of Australia and New Zealand must “stand up” against “Chinese interference.”

Clinton’s tour was a promotion for her 2017 book, *What Happened*, about her loss to Donald Trump. She received standing ovations from apparently adoring and well-off audience members, who paid between \$195 and \$495 to hear her denounce the alleged misogyny and Russian conspiracies that she blames for her defeat.

Above all, Clinton was speaking as a life-long servant of the Democratic Party, Wall Street and US imperialism. Her main mission was to reinforce Washington’s demands that the two countries step up their agitation against China and their commitments to the US drive to reassert its hegemony over the Indo-Pacific region.

As President Barack Obama’s secretary of state from 2009 to 2013, Clinton was the architect of his administration’s military, strategic and economic “pivot to Asia” that sought to encircle, isolate and confront China—a drive being escalated by Trump.

While her events were presented as an informal “Evening with Hillary Rodham Clinton,” her language was blunt. In Melbourne, she declared: “What we’re seeing now is a desire by China to extend its influence and project its power. First throughout Asia—then, throughout the world.”

The former US first lady accused “an expansionist” China of conducting “efforts under the radar … to influence Australian politics and policy.” She stated: “You must not let that happen, it is insidious, it can eat away at the fabric of democracy and can build distrust among policy makers and citizens …

“It is imperative for the Australian government to protect Australia’s interests … This is an urgent problem and one we must confront immediately and together.”

Clinton said the US must remain a Pacific power to counter China. This was essential to “back you up and support you in what you need to do to be a good trading partner, take advantage of the strategic position you find yourself in, but not allow China to undermine or subvert your own national interests or values.”

The timing of Clinton’s message was not accidental. It came amid an escalating two-year media campaign in both Australia and New Zealand against alleged Chinese interference, aided by local “agents of influence,” in every aspect of political, economic and social life.

Australia’s Liberal-National government, backed by Labor and the Greens, is about to push through parliament sweeping, anti-democratic legislation to outlaw such “foreign interference.” The passage of the bills is being closely watched in Washington as a test case for mounting a witch hunt against Chinese people, including business figures and students, as part of the preparations for trade war and war against Beijing.

Speaking in Auckland, Clinton hailed one of the local leading US think tank proponents of the anti-China offensive. “Anne-Marie Brady of the University of Canterbury has rightly called this a new global battle, and it’s just getting started,” she said. “We need to take it seriously.”

Brady, a Global Fellow at the Washington-based Woodrow Wilson Center, produced a report just before last September’s New Zealand election, which claimed that the then National Party government was beholden to Chinese business interests. Brady’s report, plus media interviews by the US ambassador to New Zealand, helped the Labour Party’s Jacinda Ardern win

office.

Clinton was not speaking simply in a personal capacity. On the same night that she appeared in Melbourne, the Obama administration's last ambassador to Australia, John Berry, told an audience of Australian military chiefs and diplomats at the Australian Naval Institute in Canberra that China was becoming more aggressive and authoritarian.

Because of the danger of confrontation, Australia and the US had to "pursue a clear-eyed strategy of risk-management." This included legislating against foreign social media activity and financial contributions. "Such actions should be illegal in each and every democratic nation," Berry said.

Clinton's warning also came a week after another purveyor of the anti-China campaign, Australian Greens member Professor Clive Hamilton testified before a US Congressional committee. He said China had "scaled up its threats of economic harm" against Australia and "this psychological warfare is only stage one, with real punishment to follow if needed."

Without any evidence, Hamilton's recent book, *Silent Invasion*, accuses Beijing of planning to take over Australia, a plight that could be averted by Australia joining a US-led war against China.

At her events, Clinton made an amalgam between the Democratic Party accusations of a Russian plot to install Trump and claims that Beijing is seeking to take control of the entire world. Russian interference in the 2016 US election was more than alarming, she said. "It is a clear and present danger to democracy."

Not only did Clinton blame the Kremlin for her election loss, she claimed it was responsible for the rising class and social struggles in the US. "The Russians are still playing on anything and everything they can to turn Americans against each other, from issues of race and gun violence to the humanitarian crisis in Syria."

While Clinton criticised Trump, she echoed his administration's National Defense Strategy, which accuses China and Russia of wanting "to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model" and declares that "inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in US national security."

Clinton's whipping up of anti-Russian and anti-Chinese sentiment was accompanied by appeals to the affluent feminist layers who utilise gender politics as

the means of gaining more privileged and higher-paid positions in the corporate, political and media elite.

In Melbourne and Sydney, Clinton was joined on stage by former Australian Labor Party Prime Minister Julia Gillard. Both attributed their political defeats to sexism, likening their fates to the Salem witch trials. "There is this fear, there is this anger, even rage at women seeking power, women exercising power and people fall back on these attacks like you are a witch or you should go to prison ... they know the power of misogyny," Clinton said.

The truth is that Gillard was undemocratically installed in office in mid-2010 via a backroom Labor Party coup against then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, who was ousted by Washington's "protected sources" in the Labor Party because he had argued that the US should make some accommodations to China's rise. Gillard fully aligned Australia with the US "pivot to Asia," including allowing US marines to be based in the northern city of Darwin.

The installation of Gillard backfired because of popular anger over Rudd's behind-the-scenes removal. Her own party sacked her ahead of the 2013 election also because of working-class hostility to the harsh austerity measures—including throwing thousands of poverty-line single mothers off parenting benefits—that were imposed by the minority government she formed with the Greens.

As for Clinton, she lost the presidential race because Trump exploited the fact that millions of predominantly working class Americans rightly viewed her as a champion of big business and US militarism, and a continuation of the Obama administration, which had driven down their living and working conditions for eight years. Despite losing the popular vote, Trump won more states than Clinton and the most votes in the arcane Electoral College that actually elects the US president.



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