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SECRET SERVICES AND THE LATENT POWER OF CULTURAL CAPITAL

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Despite their commitment to transparency, security practitioners who belong to New Zealand's secret services seldom disclose their use of academic research. This conservative public relations approach is counterproductive because, by restricting their ability to demonstrate core competencies, illustrate the connection between their work and societal values, and defend their jurisdictional monopoly, it denies them recognition as professionals. Yet few of these practitioners likely appreciate the high costs accompanying their institutionalised practice of plagiarism as they continue to invest in the tradecraft needed to collect and disseminate secret intelligence, undertake clandestine protective security measures, and manage covert violence as well as to ingest secret informational reports circulating within the Five Eyes channels. This puts them at a serious disadvantage when a cadre of security practitioners who work in policing and regulatory compliance roles enter the academic field to acquire cultural capital which, when converted into expert knowledge, enables them to become security professionals, challenge the legitimacy of secret services, and, possibly, lead a symbolic revolution in the field of New Zealand security.

Keywords: Five Eyes; transnational guild; expert knowledge; New Zealand security studies; terrorism.

At a time when, for example, the last health crisis seemed to give voice to a scientific word that could guide public action and federate public opinion, the fight against terrorism still remains in the shadows of reason and a prisoner of bureaucratic inertia, electoral interest, and foreign influences. This is neither serious nor respectful of the past and future victims of terrorism.¹

Introduction

In the long aftermath of Edward Snowden's unauthorised disclosures – which, from 2014 onwards, prompted widespread public controversy across liberal democracies by revealing the large extent to which the United States National Security Agency and its transnational intelligence-gathering network undertake electronic surveillance of government, corporate, and private communications – executives in charge of New Zealand's secret services have taken several opportunities to declare their staunch commitment to increased transparency.² Such declarations are invariably accompanied by the caveat that official secrecy imposes strict limits on what can reasonably be shared with the public and, by extension, the individuals and groups of concern to the secret services. At the same time, however, these services produce for public consumption several official documents concerning New Zealand's national security that do not cite any academic research conducted within the interdisciplinary field of security studies, including New Zealand security studies research.³ To be sure, a lack of footnotes in a few public intelligence reports does not necessarily mean that security practitioners who belong to the secret services ignore academic research in their everyday work.⁴ In fact, they explicitly state, albeit in exactly the same formulaic language over four consecutive years, their threat assessments reports are “based on information gathered from a variety of sources including New Zealand Government information, *academic research* and media reporting.”⁵ The academic problem that interests me here is that when these services fail to acknowledge the specific public sources of their knowledge – which for academics is, incidentally, the cardinal sin of plagiarism worthy of professional excommunication – we cannot understand how and explain why security practitioners within secret services use research in their everyday practices. In short, it obscures our view of these security practitioners as objects worthy of academic inquiry. But, as we shall see, it is a matter of concern for them as well.

In what follows, I signal the high costs that attend this refusal to disclose by focusing on the problem of terrorism. While this obfuscation might undercut potential critiques of their security practice that could further undermine the public's trust and confidence in the secret services, it is an unnecessary ploy since the public – and the professionals of politics who represent them – do not constitute an informed citizenry capable of forming erudite judgments on sophisticated and theoretically informed academic work. Moreover, this conservative public relations approach is ultimately counterpro-

ductive for it restricts the ability of security practitioners to demonstrate their technical competency to discharge core tasks. It also precludes them from illustrating a connection between their security practices and deeply held societal values, an important connection when trying to reclaim the social license they once held during the Cold War. It compromises, too, the ability of security practitioners to defend their service's jurisdictional monopoly from the encroachment by civil servants and other security practitioners. In short, it prevents them from claiming the status of professionals, as well as the legitimacy this status bestows.

I then argue that few of these security practitioners likely appreciate the high costs accompanying this institutionalised practice of plagiarism because they believe, mistakenly, that investing in the tradecraft needed to collect and disseminate secret intelligence, undertake clandestine protective security measures, and manage the state's covert violence, and then ingesting secret informational reports that circulate centrifugally from the US intelligence community through the internal communication channels of the so-called Five Eyes arrangement, is a sufficient knowledge base from which to make sense of contemporary security challenges.⁶ The material and ideational conditions that comprise the Five Eyes arrangement has become something of a cognitive prison for those belonging to what Didier Bigo has conceptualised as a transnational guild.⁷ This places them at a serious disadvantage when defending their position within the field of New Zealand security.

I close out this article by revealing that a cadre of New Zealand security practitioners working in policing and regulatory compliance roles are entering, in increasing numbers, the academic field of knowledge production.⁸ Here, they acquire cultural capital in the form of postgraduate degrees in security studies, a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing academic knowledge produced under the auspices of security studies, and the sophisticated methodological skills needed to produce new knowledge on security.⁹ They acquire, too, social capital in the form of networks of practitioners and academics.¹⁰ When this cadre returns to the security field, they are capable of converting their cultural capital into highly valued utile expert knowledge, becoming security professionals, and constituting an *avant-garde* capable of challenging the legitimacy of the secret services that dominate the field of New Zealand security.¹¹ If successful, this challenge would invoke nothing short of a symbolic revolution that:

... overturns cognitive, and sometimes social, structures. When it succeeds, it establishes new cognitive structures, which become invisible the more they become generally recognized, widely known and incorporated by all the perceiving subjects in a social universe. Our own categories of perception and judgement – those we ordinarily use to understand the representations of the world and the world itself – were created by [some earlier] successful symbolic revolution.¹²

And it is within this contestation for dominance of the security field that I introduce and place the articles that comprise this special issue.

The cost of institutionalized plagiarism

Enacted each time security practitioners refuse to disclose the academic sources that inform their public intelligence reports and informational brochures, this institutionalised practice of plagiarism might well be an important element of a public relations approach designed to promote positive images of the secret services to enhance public opinion on them. While security practitioners, or the public relations consultants advising them, might believe that a list of sources placed at the end of their reports and brochures as endnotes might distract their relatively few interested readers, disclosure refusal might occur here because it undercuts the ground for potential critiques that could further undermine the public's trust and confidence in the secret services if such critiques expose their lack of security expertise.¹³ This seems unnecessary, however, given the lack of informed citizenry in New Zealand capable of independently forming erudite judgments on sophisticated and theoretically informed academic work.¹⁴

The conservative character of this public relations approach renders it counterproductive because it denies security practitioners who belong to the secret services the grounds upon which to claim professional status. Moving beyond an institutional focus that pays attention to collateral materials such as professional associations with credential requirements and ethical obligations as well as dedicated newsletters and specialist magazines, which may or may not indicate the existence of a profession, I look here to the sociology of professions to understand what distinguishes professions from other kinds of work. According to Andrew Abbott, professions are defined, in part, by the extent to which they use expert knowledge to discharge their core tasks, embody social values, and promote their jurisdictional monopoly. The first core task of every profession is diagnosis. This involves colligation – that is, where an empirical picture of a specific phenomenon of concern is drawn up into a case – and categorization – that is, where that case is placed within a classification framework. To diagnose particular cases of general problems, professionals remove any contingent features of the phenomenon of concern before situating those abstracted cases within a system of expert knowledge based on classification schema designed to categorise cases into pre-existing problem sets. The second core task is inferencing. Having reconstituted phenomena of concern as cases of pre-defined general problems through their acts of diagnosis, professionals undertake a process of inferencing that involves taking diagnostic information from an abstracted case and indicating a range of possible treatments and their likely outcomes. The third core task is designing treatment plans for their abstracted cases. Academic qualifications in specialist fields are almost always a prerequisite condition of professions because they ensure those entering a profession are familiar with the body of relevant expert knowledge. This is significant because a profession's formal knowledge system is

not ordered in terms of the profession's core tasks; rather, it is organised as dissembled pieces arranged in various ways to facilitate the production of new knowledge.¹⁵

New Zealand's secret services focused their early work, during the Cold War, on a security agenda that comprised four general problems: state aggression, as well as espionage, sabotage, and subversion.¹⁶ Each of these problems threatened the integrity of New Zealand's liberal democratic system of government and the services by and large enjoyed what we would now describe as social license because their work protected the values held by mainstream society. In the late 1970s, as other liberal democracies responded to the aeroplane hijackings, hostage takings, bombings, and assassinations of political leaders by groups such as the Red Brigades, Red Army Faction, Action Directe, Provisional Irish Republican Army, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, Black September and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the problem of terrorism was added to New Zealand's security agenda, though the concept has evolved from international terrorism to include transnational terrorism to more recently home-grown terrorism.¹⁷ In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, New Zealand parliament defined terrorism under Sec. 5 of the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002, which was amended in 2021 when Sec. 5A on planning and preparatory acts was added. Brenton Tarrant is, at the present moment, the only person convicted for an act of terrorism in New Zealand. The New Zealand Government's response to Tarrant's attack on Christchurch mosques on 15 March 2019, which took form as a public inquiry, created the conditions that now oblige the secret services to produce intelligence assessments for public consumption, though the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet had released counterterrorism strategies before then.¹⁸

New Zealand security practitioners cannot demonstrate they diagnose, make inferences, and treat cases of the problem of terrorism to a professional standard because they do not cite the academic literature on terrorism and security studies more generally, or the smaller, but growing, specialised knowledge grounded in empirical evidence found in New Zealand. This is concerning for the international literature on terrorism is vast and, among a flurry of studies published in the aftermath of Tarrant's attack, there are two journal special issues devoted to terrorism in New Zealand and New Zealand counterterrorism, respectively.¹⁹ John Battersby, author of over a dozen articles and book chapters on New Zealand counterterrorism, diagnoses a plethora of potential cases of terrorism within New Zealand.²⁰ These include, *inter alia*: Ananda Marga; Full Gospel Mission; Neil Roberts' bombing of the Police Computer Centre in Whanganui; the bombing of the Trades Hall building; the introduction of rabbit hemorrhagic disease to New Zealand; cyanide-laced letters sent to the US Embassy and the British and Australian high commissions; activists training camps in the Urewera involving firearms and Molotov cocktails, as well as an expressed intention to assassinate political leaders; letters containing milk powder containing 1080 poison; bombings furthering industrial action, protests against New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam war, and

bombings and bomb and death threats against the 1981 Springbok tour, as well as a firebombing in the context of protests against French nuclear testing in the South Pacific. Battersby also addresses Brenton Tarrant's attack. His work demonstrates that New Zealand security practitioners doing counterterrorism work pay very little regard to this veritable history of political violence in New Zealand.

This refusal to disclose academic sources denies security practitioners the opportunity to link their core tasks to deeply held and widespread social values, such as the use of reliable evidence and robust analytical processes, respect for human rights, as well as ensuring that the secret services work in the best interests of society rather than in their own interests. This is especially important because parliament has granted these security practitioners extraordinary powers to collect and disseminate secret intelligence, undertake clandestine protective security measures, and manage the use of covert violence. It is also important because secret services embraced an expansive concept of national security after the end of the Cold War and, in the aftermath of both the Dot-com affair and Snowden's revelations, extended their reach across a great deal of the machinery of government and into the financial and telecommunications sectors.²¹

Refusing to disclose their academic sources in publications compromises their ability to defend their jurisdictional monopoly, putting security practitioners who belong to the secret services at a serious disadvantage when their primacy within the security field is challenged. In the 2010s, public servants from within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet raided the security field to enlarge their own jurisdictional monopoly by mainstreaming the secret services into the bureaucracy, anointing themselves responsible for setting national security policy and strategy, and replacing security practitioners as the government's experts on national security.²² Pat Helm, one of the key architects of this reform and lead author of *New Zealand's National Security System*, demonstrated his professionalism by citing expert knowledge on public sector performance and risk management when diagnosing the secret services as a case within a set of public policy problems and designing a plan for addressing this problem.²³

Given there is no required undergraduate or postgraduate academic qualifications that serves to introduce a prerequisite body of knowledge for New Zealand security practitioners-in-the-making and, as the example of terrorism illustrates, they do not disclose their use of expert knowledge to discharge their core tasks, reflect social values, or to defend their jurisdictional monopoly, they do not meet the standards of a profession. Rather, New Zealand security practitioners working within secret services are best understood as undertaking vocational work. This refusal to disclose academic sources raises the deeply uncomfortable questions about the extent to which these security practitioners really *know* what they are talking about in their publications. In the dark shadow cast by scandals involving them, this problematises, rather than endorses, their claims to legitimacy.

Mimetic engulfment and the transnational guild

Didier Bigo coined the term ‘transnational guilds’ to refer to security practitioners whose solidarity is based on their highly specialised practices and knowledge “which often transcends differences in terms of national culture.”²⁴ He uses the term to normalise the transnational character of these security practitioners by comparing them to social movements and non-governmental organisations, such as environmental activists or Doctors without Borders. He explains that:

By insisting on the ‘entanglement’ of the transnational and the national, of the external and the internal, and the hybridization that is created when groups belonging to state bureaucracies act transversally and behave like classic transnational actors, we are able to analyse a large set of practices which, de facto, are deeply transforming what we call ‘the state.’ A series of assumptions about the assumed link of loyalty between politicians and civil servants of various bureaucracies, especially when bureaucracies develop transnational contacts with their homologous partners, requires re-examination.²⁵

Once these groups routinely exchange information, skills, and technologies – and even socialise with one another at work and after work – they develop a strong autonomy from the professionals of politics who dominate national fields of power and their loyalties are tested “when they are obliged to choose between the national security imperatives defined by politicians and the loyalty to their colleagues abroad doing the same work and with whom they share so much.”²⁶

We see, through Bigo’s term, how belonging to the Five Eyes imposes limits on the extent to which New Zealand security practitioners can fully appreciate the high costs accompanying their institutionalised practice of plagiarism. There is a material dimension where those within this transnational guild share a common view of the world mapped through the circulation of information flows and the configurations of data repositories. Given their working selves are defined by – and almost entirely depend upon – Five Eyes membership, security practitioners reproduce this materiality in their ongoing investment in the tradecraft needed to collect and disseminate secret intelligence and undertake clandestine protective security measures. We can see how the materiality of their operational capabilities leads them to believe the value of secret intelligence goes without saying and the value proposition of ongoing Five Eyes membership can be demonstrated by the fact they receive 99 reports for every one they produce.

There is, too, an ideational dimension that has become something of a cognitive prison for members of the transnational guild. It is prison of the mind because the culture of shared secrecy that maintains the ignorance of outsiders at the same time curates for its members stultifying effects that follow the process of formal indoctrination and an inescapable myopia that ensues from the experience that Bill Wilshire describes as mimetic

engulfment; that is, “the pre-rational structures of involuntary imitation of others.”²⁷ Intelligence information produced by the US for the US is framed and indelibly informed by American exceptionalism, the American civic religion, and American capitalism, all of which is antithetical to New Zealand’s experience and interests.²⁸ Membership requires an indoctrination that shapes how the world is to be understood by New Zealand security practitioners, which dangers are foreseen, and where America’s enemies are identified, categorized, and treated in ways that advance US power in contemporary world affairs. It required New Zealand security practitioners to elevate the problem of terrorism to the forefront of its security agenda in the days, months, and years after the 9/11 attacks because counterterrorism constituted an expedient opportunity for New Zealand security practitioners to deepen their working relationships with American counterparts. Membership trains the New Zealand security practitioner’s gaze to focus on those actors who actively challenge the international political strategy of the US and encourages them to publicly denounce Russia and China as the sources of the world’s troubles.²⁹ It also creates an induced and selective amnesia where they cannot recognise, implicitly or explicitly, the many US actions degrading the international order since NATO’s unlawful use of force in Kosovo in 1999, but more recently in its support for Israel’s unlawful violence in Gaza and its sanctioning of staff at the International Criminal Court at The Hague.³⁰ This special amnesia creates an obvious strategic vulnerability for New Zealand when security practitioners believe the secret informational reports produced by the US intelligence community, which they routinely ingest, offers a sufficient knowledge base from which to make sense of contemporary security challenges. It means that it is practically impossible to disenchant members of this guild. The ties that bind the secret services are the ties that also blind them.³¹

New Zealand security practitioners will not escape this prison until they are no longer members of the transnational guild and when the once little known service-to-service intelligence-sharing agreement, which is now trumpeted as a diplomatic triumph that shapes New Zealand’s foreign policy, is abjured. Rather than a tactical retreat or escape, given what is at stake for those involved the exiting will more likely be through a slow estrangement as New Zealand’s intelligence capabilities become less and less valued by their American colleagues, especially now that the US focuses more of its attention and commits more of its own diplomatic, military, and intelligence resources into the South Pacific region. The NSA also increasingly invests in mapping their collection coverage to the distribution of fibre optical cabling (to which New Zealand does not have unique access) and develops strong relationships with SIGINT professionals in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden.³² Few within the secret services will intuitively sense in these possible circumstances an opportunity to re-orientate themselves to better understand contemporary world affairs from a New Zealand, rather than Five Eyes, perspective and to develop the autonomous material and human capabilities to gather and disseminate the foreign human intelli-

gence needed to sustain that independent perspective. In the meantime, they are left ill-prepared to counter a looming challenge to their position on the field of security.

Towards a New Security Professional

From 2010 onwards, the New Zealand Government embraced an expansive definition of national security that encompasses a broad range of policing and regulatory compliance issues and began to adopt a 'homeland security' operating model that implicates most, if not all, its coercive apparatus.³³ This transformation has so far culminated in New Zealand's first national security strategy that named twelve problem sets as core national security issues, another four as connected issues, and twenty-two public service agencies as part of the national security sector.³⁴ During this time, an increasing number of security practitioners undertaking monitoring, surveillance, and control activities within policing and regulatory compliance roles have completed academic programmes of study within the interdisciplinary field of security studies. They have been introduced to "bodies of knowledge and traditions of inquiry that had not previously been part of their experience and equip[ed]... with the analytical skills...that will enable them to move confidently within those traditions and to engage in independent research after a [programme] is over."³⁵ After many long hours of study, they obtain a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing academic knowledge produced under the auspices of security studies and develop the sophisticated methodological skills needed to produce new knowledge on security. They graduate with undergraduate and postgraduate certificates, diplomas, and degrees in security studies.

By entering the academic field of knowledge production, these security practitioners can accumulate cultural capital which, represented by their qualifications, is embodied in their deep understanding of particular cases of general security problems, proficiency in applying analytical and other sense-making techniques, familiarity with canonical works on security, and mastery of theories that explain the deeper causes of matters of security concern. They can also accumulate social capital in the form of networks of current and future practitioners, academics specialising in security studies and producing cutting edge knowledge on security, and guest speakers from within the security field. Both forms of capital are crucial to navigating the struggles of the academic field.³⁶ But rather than remain in the academic field, these security practitioners return to the security field and, with varying degrees of success, struggle to convert the cultural capital into highly valued utile expert knowledge. These security practitioners obtain legitimacy as professionals when they use, and acknowledge their use of, expert knowledge to undertake their core tasks, signal a connection between their work and societal values, and defend their jurisdictional monopolies.³⁷ Unlike their counterparts in the secret services, they do not hold extraordinary powers that necessitate special oversight measures and they have not been embroiled in global scandals. Their social license is rarely, if ever, called into question.

Here we see clearly the sociogenesis of New Zealand's security profession and how this first generation of security professionals are now capable of challenging the dominance of the secret services. Taking advantage of the bureaucratization of the secret services, the expansive notion of national security, and the broad array of policing and regulatory compliance problems that are recategorised as core national security issues, the new security professionals re-orientate the security field away from expertise used to protect the state from armed attack, espionage, sabotage, subversion and terrorism towards expertise used to promote public safety and protect the population at large from a broad array of harms. New Zealand's response to the problem of terrorism is salient here. Combating terrorism became part of New Zealand's international political strategy when the NZSAS was deployed to Afghanistan as part of the US-led war on terror and New Zealand collectors of secret intelligence supported them.³⁸ But at home Tarrant's attack was diagnosed as an act of terrorism, a charge of terrorism was laid, and the case was treated through the criminal justice system.³⁹ As wheels of criminal justice turned, the security services were investigated by a Royal Commission of Inquiry whose political purpose was to grant them a clean bill of health by finding no one to blame for not identifying the threat posed by Tarrant's capabilities and intentions to carry out his attack.⁴⁰ We can also see the tilting of the security field towards public safety in the legal definition of the crime of terrorism adopted in the aftermath of 11 September attack, which criminalises a set of acts that are undertaken not only "to coerce or force a government or international organization to do or abstain from doing any act" but also "to intimidate a population." These new security professionals are an *avant-garde* capable of challenging the legitimacy of the secret services and are now capable of leading a symbolic revolution, sweeping aside those security practitioners who currently dominate the security field by reframing the field's purpose in terms of public safety. This involves displacing the *raison d'état* by heralding, as more important, the first responsibility of constitutional governments; that is, to protect its citizens.

The secret services are poorly equipped to counter this revolution. As Pierre Bourdieu explained, successful strategies of resistance 'return to the sources.' To illustrate what he means by this, Bourdieu points to how protestant reformers wrong-footed the orthodox church by laying "claim to the sources which it had consecrated its own... to go back to the texts over which the legitimate manipulation of which the Church had done once and for all established a monopoly... over access to the sacred texts. The heretics divest the priesthood of its monopoly, as it were, by stealing its sources, its texts."⁴¹ While the salient lesson here for New Zealand security practitioners working within the secret services is that they must return to the traditional security agenda of the Cold War and the general problems of state aggression, espionage, sabotage, subversion, and terrorism – but only where it is defined as the targeted use or threat of political violence against civilians or non-combatants intended to coerce a government or other political authority to act in a certain way – because a security agenda cohering around the preservation of the integrity of New Zealand's democratic institutions, processes, and values

is the only way to restore their much-needed social license. However, without sufficient expert knowledge they are unlikely to be taken seriously as professionals.

Reconstructing New Zealand's contemporary security agenda

In September 2025, on behalf of the editorial board of the *National Security Journal* I circulated a call for papers immediately following the release of the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service's third *Security Threat Environment Assessment*. I suggested that more than playing a key role within the security intelligence cycle, these types of intelligence products are designed to shape the contours of any ensuing public debates on national security, inform the public of the more serious dangers facing them, and encourage the public to report suspicious behavior. I called for submissions from researchers working within any academic discipline or field of study, as well as from security professionals past or present, that respond to the phenomenon of intelligence assessments in general or the most recent NZSIS Assessment in particular. I was especially interested in receiving submissions that focus on how New Zealand intelligence professionals understand one or more of the following security problems: violent extremism; foreign interference; espionage; insider threat; and strategic competition. I was also interested in receiving submissions concerned with how the 'national security community' respond to one or more of those problems, the conditions under which expert knowledge on national security is produced, and how that knowledge is used. Not all submissions were accepted for publication but the five we chose to include in this special issue underwent a rigorous blind peer review process and went through several drafting phases. The articles selected for this special issue exemplify the latent power of the cultural capital accumulated by new security professionals capable of challenging the legitimacy of the secret services that dominate the security field. Each casts new light on the ways in which new knowledge drives the reconstruction of New Zealand's contemporary security agenda.

Liam P. S. Hoselton draws on the latest academic research to conceptualise the problem of foreign interference as "an array of activities thought to be undertaken or directed by an external actor, often involving a proxy, with the real or perceived intent to harm a target's interests, values, norms, processes, relationships, institutions, capacities or capabilities." While he does not see foreign interference, or the activities it involves, as a new security problem, he shows how it now occupies a central place within the contemporary security agenda of western liberal democracies. The problem of foreign interference has not only displaced terrorism as a preeminent security threat, but the range of possible responses to the former comprise the capabilities, resources, networks, and practices that were designed to counter the latter. Significantly, Hoselton does not merely describe this redeployment of the counterterrorism apparatus. Instead, he compiles two extensively researched and empirically rich case histories, one on New Zealand, the other Canada, and subjects them to a meticulous analysis before drawing on as-

semblage theory to explain why this transformation occurs within national security architectures. In this respect, Hoselton offers an argument that deserves our full consideration: namely, “that the continuity, adaptation and differentiation of counterterrorism approaches in foreign interference response are best understood as a contested process of institutional development rather than a natural evolution of security policy.” This article gives us valuable insight into how the construction of the security agenda is less a result of speech acts uttered by those with political authority and more an effect of the struggles among security professionals over who gets to determine which problems and security practices are taken seriously and the allocation of resources and status.

Donna Cleaver inserts the phenomenon of ‘sovereignists activities’ into a nascent typology of the general security problem of anti-government extremism. Drawing on an extensive corpus of legal and official information on the public record, she begins to flesh out these activities and why they ought to constitute a matter of concern for New Zealand security practitioners. Cleaver develops a novel concept – *lorefare*, “which encompasses a repertoire that includes, for example, vexatious filings, pseudolaw documents, quasi-official identities and sovereign micro-nation constructs” – to better understand variation among sovereignist activities. This variation is important because security practitioners will only diagnose cases involving sovereignist activities if they involve an intention and capability to use violence. This is partly because the secret services have finite resourcing and functional limitations that preclude their engagement with cases that are positioned “below the threshold” for security practitioner mobilisation and law enforcement action. To help remedy this misalignment, Cleaver offers a new framework that render these activities both visible and intelligible, suggesting that security practitioners adopt a graduated approach that tracks behavior rather than waiting for violence to trigger a reactive treatment of a case. The benefit of this approach lies in reducing the scope for disproportionate security practices to validate persistent grievances. Cleaver’s argument, which draws on and advances our academic knowledge of anti-government extremism, is further strengthened by comparing the New Zealand case material to similar situations in Germany and the Netherlands, taking our frame of reference beyond the more usual Five Eyes comparisons.

Taking aim at the public intelligence reports produced by security practitioners within the secret services, Kieran Smith tests conventional thinking and received wisdom on transparency as an unqualified good in and of itself. Drawing on the postmodern thinking of Jean Baudrillard, this article problematises the notion of transparency as another instrument used by security practitioners to maintain the status quo order by defending their jurisdictional monopoly on producing and disseminating secret intelligence on cases of terrorism and violent extremism. When they produce public intelligence on these cases and general security problems, security practitioners reify and flatten them and this technique is reproduced within the government’s public statements to preempt accusations of dysfunction within the secret services. Smith draws our attention

to the echo of the full transparency afforded to Tarrant's lived-streamed act of terrorism and the official performance of counterterrorism. Smith also treats critically the growing academic literature on public intelligence, showing us its strengths and weaknesses, before contributing to this literature by deepening our understanding of transparency in terms of its meaning and utility, and the danger of security practitioners taking for granted themselves the oversimplified terms and banal logics they impose upon New Zealand society.

Justin Alves invites us to stand back and take a larger view of the impact that artificial intelligence (AI) has on international security. He challenges conventional thinking on AI that frames this rapidly evolving technology in world revolutionary terms and suggests that, instead, we think about the race to develop AI as a new security dilemma. By drawing on a large pool of relevant academic literature, which he supplements with interviews with subject-matter experts, Alves insists that we must reckon with the power of hype, fear of missing out, vested commercial interests and geopolitical paranoia alongside more tangible technological factors. In fact, he suspects that those subjective factors may be more powerful drivers of the AI race than material considerations such as algorithm speed and semiconductor capacity. He zeros in on the New Zealand Government's current strategic response to the development and use of AI and finds that it is well considered but tends towards an overly optimistic assumption about the economic dividend while underplaying its insecurity multiplier effect. These are important issues of growing concern for security practitioners within the secret services and beyond.

Also deeply concerned about AI, but focusing attention on its impact on the problem of terrorism, Joe Edwards demonstrates the urgent need for a serious national security conversation on AI's risks and opportunities. Drawing on official information, interviews of subject-matter experts, and a meta-analysis of themes recurring through the ever-increasing academic literature on AI, Edwards warns that New Zealand policymakers are paying insufficient attention to the multifaceted relationship between AI and the problem of terrorism. This extends to the practice of counterterrorism because policymakers are preoccupied with obtaining productivity gains while protecting the privacy rights of New Zealanders. Edwards offers several recommendations that would strengthen the ways in which New Zealand's security practitioners might respond to cases of terrorism that are enabled through this rapidly evolving technology. This is a clarion call that should resonate among those with responsibilities for managing various problems on New Zealand security agenda. Through their original research on this topic, both Alves and Edwards make important contributions to the New Zealand security studies literature that will provide a strong foundation for future researchers.

In the final article, John Battersby and I present our initial findings from a survey of self-selecting intelligence professionals that we undertook in mid 2026 and where we asked a series of questions relating to intelligence as a profession and the role played by higher education in it. Our focus here has been to empirically establish the state of

New Zealand's situation and collate our case material in such a way as to give voice to the key concerns of our participants. That voice clearly values higher education, sees it as important, practical, and useful but its full potential is stymied by ever-present fiscal challenges, varying understandings of educational value among intelligence managers, and a concern about lacking intelligence-literacy at senior levels of New Zealand's public service organisations. We remain very grateful to those participants, as we are to the New Zealand Institute of Intelligence Professionals for circulating our call for participants. We hope all of our participants and the NZIIP membership take an interest in our findings here, and in subsequent publications that flow from this project. Our rather sober conclusion – that New Zealand's intelligence capability is under-valued, under-trained, and under-educated at a time when it is needed more than ever – will likely come as no surprise to many of our readers.

Conclusion: practice meets theory

Over a decade ago Marc Sageman suggested moving beyond the current “system of terrorism research in which intelligence analysts know everything but understand nothing, while academics understand everything but know nothing” to embrace the co-production of knowledge between security practitioners who are in possession of accurate, timely and reliable intelligence but are without expert techniques in sense-making and academics who are equipped with such techniques but are without access to intelligence.⁴² However, Sageman's model is weak because it requires us to wish away the prevailing social hierarchies while ignoring the power asymmetries between the two groups, their different aims, and their different jurisdictional monopolies. The outcome of his approach would likely see academics approach security practitioners, with cap in hand, seeking funding and increased status derived from proximity to bureaucratic and executive power. It would subordinate academics and encourage them to genuflect to security practitioners, bureaucrats, and the professional of politics.⁴³

In contrast, John Battersby's seminal contribution to the nascent field of New Zealand security studies is built on a transversal strategy where, as a liminal figure on both the academic and security fields, he neither surrenders the intellectual independence which academic freedom protects, nor is he obliged to play on the security field when producing academic research. Drawing on his own often frustrating experience of publishing research on New Zealand security in international journals, Battersby established the *National Security Journal* in 2019 to build a bridge between security practitioners and academics producing knowledge on security. But the bridge itself does not constitute a site of exchange or cooperation. Rather, it is the means by which an emerging cadre of security professionals move back and forth to the academic field to occasionally demonstrate the power of both their cultural capital and their expert knowledge.

As this introduction has demonstrated, thinking through field theory illuminates a pathway for professionalising security practice. Along this pathway security practitioners invest time on the academic field to learn about existing knowledge on security and how that knowledge is produced and disseminated. Thinking through field theory also signals cultural capital's latent power in contestations over the social hierarchies ordering New Zealand's security field where security professionals have the knowledge expertise needed to discharge their core tasks, reflect social values in the work, and defend their jurisdictional monopoly from challenges. Here, then, a key difference distinguishing security professionals from practitioners is that the former understand why theory is important to producing knowledge on security studies and why this matters to the way they use this expert knowledge. The latter tend to bemoan the fact that theory is irrelevant to them because it is not directly applicable in their everyday tasks. Only the security professional can consider the thinking on security as well as think about the practices of security.⁴⁴ As Francios Thuillier, the author of this article's epigraph, has suggested, "the services must be intellectually rearmed with greater recourse to the human and social sciences and must begin to educate public opinion about the threat by trying to objectify the real danger that terrorism represents today in relation to the other perils that surround us. This concern for clear-sightedness is the mother of all battles."⁴⁵ If one were even needed at this moment of intersecting crises in contemporary world affairs, the business case for investing in New Zealand security studies as an intellectual project to transform security practitioners within the secret services into *bone fide* professionals and promote the public's understanding of what the secret services do, and why, is stronger than ever.

1 Francois Thuillier, "Liberty, equality, and counter-terrorism in France," in *Intelligence Oversight in Times of Transnational Impunity: Who Will Watch the Watchers?*, eds. Didier Bigo, Emma Mc Cluskey, and Felix Treguer (New York: Routledge, 2024), p. 236.

2 Zygmunt Bauman, Didier Bigo, Paulo Esteves, Elspeth Guild, Vivienne Jabri, David Lyon, and R.B.J Walker, "After Snowden: Rethinking the Impact of Surveillance," *International Political Sociology* (2014) 8, 121-144. For declarations concerning transparency, see, for instance: Director-General GCSB, *Opening Statement to the Intelligence & Security Committee*, 8 December 2015; Director-General NZSIS, *Letting in the Light – Increasing Transparency in the New Zealand Intelligence Community*, 30 October 2017.

3 In addition to the annual reports for parliament, there are two types of public documents of interest; public intelligence reports and informational brochures. For an example of the former, see: NZSIS, *New Zealand's Security Threat Environment 2026: An Assessment by the New Zealand Intelligence Service*. For an example of the latter, see: NZSIS, *Know the signs: A guide for identifying signs of violent extremism*, n.d; NZSIS, *Trusted Research: Guidance for Institutions and Researchers*, n.d; The New Zealand Security Intelligence Service has also begun publishing quarterly community newsletters.

4 By security practitioners who belong to the secret services, I mean here those individuals who are employed by the Government Communications Security Bureau and the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service to either collect and disseminate secret intel-

ligence or undertake clandestine protective security measures (especially cyber security measures taken against advanced and persistence threats under Sec. 12 of the Intelligence and Security Act 2017), as well as those members of the New Zealand Defence Force employed to use covert violence. These individuals are granted extraordinary powers under New Zealand law and are subject to specialized oversight through the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security and the Inspector-General of Defence. I use the term secret services to distinguish them from those who, working in policing and regulatory compliance roles, undertake monitoring, surveillance, and control activities and describe themselves as part of New Zealand's national security sector.

5 New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, *New Zealand's Security Threat Environment 2026: An Assessment by the New Zealand Intelligence Service*, p.34. Similar assessments for 2025, 2024, and 2023 are available at: <https://www.nzsis.govt.nz/our-work/new-zealands-security-threat-environment>. My emphasis added.

6 On the significance of secure communications infrastructure between the United States and the United Kingdom during the Cold War, see: Aaron Bateman, "The weakest link: The vulnerability of U.S. and allied global information networks in the nuclear age," *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2025) 48(1), 156-185.

7 Didier Bigo, "Sociology of Transnational Guilds," *International Political Sociology* (2016) 10, 398-416.

8 By New Zealand security practitioners working in policing and regulatory compliance roles I refer to those undertaking monitoring, surveillance, and control activities within the New Zealand Police, Department of Corrections, New Zealand Customs Service, Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and Ministry of Transport, among others.

9 According to Swartz, "Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital does not reduce to knowledge and skills directly related to productivity but represents a capacity to make individuals more effective actors within particular social milieu. This, proper types of schooling, reading certain books, acquiring stylized manners, speaking in a certain way, can all function as cultural capital to enhance valued participation in selected social settings." David L. Swartz, *Symbolic Power, Politics, and Intellectuals: The Political Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 53.

10 As Trine Villumsen Berling explains, social capital "concerns the formation of networks in the field and the power you gain from knowing and/or representing (the right) people in the field.... Social capital thus adds to the standing of an agent in the field; if you can claim to represent others, you add to your position as being able to speak authoritatively." Trine Villumsen Berling, *The International Political Sociology of Security: Rethinking Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 63-64.

11 On security experts and security expertise, see Gil Eyal and Grace Pok, "What is security expertise? From the sociology of professions to the analysis of networks of expertise," in Trine Villumsen Berling and Christian Bueger, eds. *Security Expertise: Practice, Power, Responsibility* (New York: Routledge 2015), 37-59.

12 Pierre Bourdieu, *Manet: A Symbolic Revolution* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), p. 3.

13 For such critiques, see: Damien Rogers, "Deconstructing national security strategy as professional struggle," *Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences* (2024) 5(1), 211-244; John Battersby, Rhys Ball & Nick Nelson, N. "New Zealand's Counter-terrorism Strategy: A Critical Assessment," *National Security Journal* (2020), 2(1): 1-18.; Damien Rogers, "Intelligence and Security Act 2017: A Preliminary Critique," *New Zealand Law Review* (2018) 4, 657-692.

14 On fostering informed citizens, see Damien Rogers & Shaun Mawdsley, "Reconfiguring the Relationship Between Intelligence Professionals and the Public: A First Step Towards Democratising New Zealand's National Security?" *National Security Journal* (2021) 3(3), 67-88.

15 Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labour* (University of Chicago 1988), especially chapter 2 titled "Professional Work, 35-58.

16 The New Zealand Special Air Service and New Zealand Security Service were established in 1955 and 1956, respectively. While the Government Communications Security

Bureau was formally established in 1977, the New Zealand military had collected signals intelligence during World War One and Two. For further details see: Richard S. Hill and Steven Loveridge, *Secret History: State Surveillance in New Zealand, 1900-1956* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2023); Desmond Ball, Cliff Lord, and Meredith Thatcher, *Invaluable Service: The Secret History of New Zealand's Signals Intelligence during Two World Wars* (Waimauku: Resource Books, 2011); Geoffrey Palmer, "The Criminal Law, the Intelligence and Security Act 2017 and the Protective Security Requirements," *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* (2023) 54(1): 283-284; Rhys Ball, *The platforms: an examination of New Zealand Special Air Service campaigns from Borneo 'confrontation' to the Vietnam War, 1965-1971* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Palmerston North: Massey University, 2009).

17 Aviva Guttman, *Operation Wrath of God: The Secret History of European Intelligence and Mossad's Assassination Campaign* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025); Constant Willem Hijzen, *Roots of Counterterrorism: Contemporary Wisdom from Dutch Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented "Terrorism"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). See also: Sheridan Webb, "From Hijackings to Right Wing Extremism: The Drivers of New Zealand's Counter-terrorism legislation 1977-2020," *National Security Journal* (2021) 3(1): pp.101-124.

18 See recommendation 17 in William Young and Jacqui Caine (2020), *Ko to tatou kainanga tenei [This is our home]: Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019*. Available at: <http://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report>.

19 For special issues, see: Charles Crothers & Thomas O'Brien [guest editors] Special Issue: The Context of the Christchurch terror attacks: social science perspectives, *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* (2020) 15(2), 247-384; Damien Rogers and Richard Jackson [guest editors] Special Issue: New Zealand and Counter-Terrorism *National Security Journal*, (2023) 5(1): 1-21.

20 See, for instance: John Battersby, "Can old lessons inform current directions? Australia, New Zealand Ananda Marga terrorism 1975-1978," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (2021) 44(8): 686-700; John Battersby, "The Ghost of New Zealand's Terrorism: Past and Present," *National Security Journal* (2019). 1(1): 35-47; John Battersby, "Terrorism where Terror Is Not: Australian and New Zealand Terrorism Compared," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (2018) 41(1): 59-76; John Battersby & Rhys Ball, "Christchurch in the context of New Zealand Terrorism and Right Wing Extremism," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* (2019) 14(3): 191-207.

21 Rogers, "Intelligence and Security Act 2017; Damien Rogers "Extraditing Kim Dotcom: a case for reforming New Zealand's intelligence community?" *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* (2015) 10(1), 46-57.

22 Damien Rogers, "Sociogenesis of security bureaucrats in New Zealand," *Critical Studies on Security* (2026), <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2025.2595780>, 1-28.

23 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *New Zealand's National Security System*, available at: <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2017-03/national-security-system.pdf>. See, for instance: Partick Helm "Risk and resilience: strategies for security," *Civil Engineering and Environmental Systems* (2005) 32 (1-2): 100-118; Partick Helm. "Risk Management for national security issues," *Science and Security: Informing New Zealand. Proceedings of a Conference Organized by the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 17 November 2005, pp. 7-26.

24 Didier Bigo, "Sociology of Transnational Guilds," *International Political Sociology* (2016) 10, 2016, 398.

25 *ibid*, 406

26 *ibid*, 409.

27 Didier Bigo, "Shared secrecy in a digital age and a transnational world," *Intelligence and National Security* (2019) 34(3): 379-394. Bill Wilshire, *The Moral Collapse of the University*, cited in Michael McKinley, "American Intelligence as American Knowing," *Alternatives* 21 (1996), p. 32.

28 McKinley, "American Intelligence as American Knowing."

- 29 GCSB, "Media Release: Cyber campaign attributed to China," 21 December 2018; GCSB, "Media Release: Malicious cyber activity attributed to Russia," 4 October 2018.
- 30 PARISS Collective, "On the Symbolic Force of International Law: The Case of Gaza," *Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences* (2024) 5(2), 167-188; Aurelia Kalisky, Nahed Samour, and Mathias Delori, "Gaza buried under Holocaust Memory, International Law and Staatsrason: Interview of Nahed Samour and Aurelia Kalisky by Mathias Delori," *Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences* (2025) 6(2) 223-158.
- 31 Jeffrey T. Richelson and Desmond Ball, *The Ties that Bind: UK/USA Intelligence and Security Network* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- 32 Ronja Kniep, "The code of silence: Transnational autonomy and oversight of signals intelligence," in *Intelligence Oversight in Times of Transnational Impunity: Who Will Watch the Watchers?* Eds. Didier Bigo, Emma Mc Cluskey and Felix Treguer (New York and London: Routledge, 2024), 98-129.
- 33 Kelly Gates, "The Globalization of Homeland Security," in *Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies*, ed. Kristie all, Kevin Heggerty, and David Lyon (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 292-99; Conor Gearty, *Homeland Security: The Rise and Rise of Global Anti-Terrorism Law* (Cambridge: Polity, 2024). The key reports underpinning these developments are Jacki Couchman, *Review of Arrangements for Coordinating National Security and Intelligence Priorities* (2013), Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *New Zealand's National Security System* (2011), and Simon Murdoch, *Report to the State Services Commissioner: Intelligence Agencies Review* (2009). Copies held on file by the author.
- 34 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *To Tatou Korowai Manaaki | Secure Together: New Zealand's National Security Strategy 2023—2028* (2023).
- 35 Stanley Fish, *Save the World on Your Own Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 12.
- 36 David L. Swartz, *The Academic Trumpists: Radical Against Liberal Diversity* (New York: Routledge, 2025).
- 37 See, for instance, Kim Beaumont, Abi Bloy and Alendra Neems, *Regulatory Intelligence: Enabling Modern Regulatory Practice* (New Zealand Institute of Intelligence Professionals, 2025), which cites several works from within the academic field of Intelligence Studies.
- 38 Terence Arnold and Geoffrey Palmer, *Report of the Government Inquiry into Operation Burnham and related matters* (July 2020); Madeleine Laracy, *Report of Inquiry into the role of the GCSB an NZSIS in relation to certain specific evets in Afghanistan* (Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, June 2020).
- 39 Although Tarrant's attack is almost uniformly diagnosed as a case of terrorism, no one seriously claims that he sought to coerce the New Zealand Government to act in a certain way or intimidate the population of New Zealand. He targeted a minority community instead. We will never know if this important politico-social distinction, which is crucial for the prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide, would prove a hurdle for the crown prosecutor because Tarrant pled guilty to the terrorism charge.
- 40 Damien Rogers, Nick Nelson and John Battersby, "Public inquiries on counterterrorism: New Zealand's experience," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (2023) 16(3), 452-474; Chris Wilson and Michal Dziwulski, *He Told US: How an Australian Committed Far-Right Terrorism in Christchurch, New Zealand* (Auckland: Allen & Unwin, 2026).
- 41 Bourdieu, *Manet*, p. 179.
- 42 Marc Sageman, "The Stagnation in Terrorism Research," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26(4) (2014), p. 576.
- 43 Damien Rogers, "New Zealand Security Intellectuals: Critic or Courtesan?" in Wil Hoverd, Nick Nelson & Carl Bradley (eds) *New Zealand National Security: Challenges, Trends and Issues* (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2017), 308-325.

44 Pinar Bilgin “Security Studies: Theory/Practice,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (1999) 12(2), 31-42.

45 Thuillier, “Liberty, equality and counter-terrorism in France,” p. 237.