

Free Speech and the Tyranny of ‘Kindness’. Jacinda Ardern in the Global Limelight

New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern Wants to Put Kindness into Politics

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***Jacinda Ardern**, New Zealand’s prime minister, grabbed the global limelight a few years ago, making headlines by stating she wanted to put “kindness” into politics. In 2019, Foreign Policy, a publication closely associated with the Atlantic Council and the US State Department, published the article [‘The Kindness Quotient’](#), a glowing promotion of Ardern.*

The strategic marketing of Ardern in various publications has focused on her likeability, pro-environment stance, compassionate values and collaborative nature. To further appeal to liberal sentiments, she was said to represent everything Trump is not.

Ardern belongs to a set of global leaders who were groomed for their positions through the World Economic Forum (WEF) [Young Global Leaders programme](#). Yes, that WEF – the elitist organisation where hard-nose billionaires and their handmaidens gather to set out policies aligned with powerful business interests.

The charm offensive that Ardern’s promoters undertook was an investment. She delivered on COVID and is now expected to sell more questionable policies to the public.

Arden recently stated at the UN:

“As leaders, we are rightly concerned that even the most light-touch approaches to disinformation could be misinterpreted as hostile to values of free speech that we value so highly.”

She went on to state:

“How do you tackle climate change if people believe it does not exist? How do you ensure the human rights of others are upheld as they are subjected to hateful and dangerous ideology.”

She continued by saying speech (that the authorities disagree with) can be a weapon of war.

During COVID, [Ardern urged citizens](#) to trust the government and its agencies for all information and stated:

“Otherwise, dismiss anything else. We will continue to be your single source of truth.”

Throughout that period, in the US, Fauci presented himself as ‘the science’. In New Zealand, Ardern’s government was ‘the truth’. It was similar in countries across the world – different figures but the same approach.

When anyone in power or any institution lays claim to ‘the truth’, history shows we are on a slippery slope to silencing thought and dissent that we disagree with.

Like other political leaders, during COVID, Ardern clamped down on civil liberties with the full force of state violence on hand to ensure compliance with ‘the truth’.

Clearly, Ardern is not alone here. Trudeau, Biden and others display Orwellian undertones as they talk of the need to challenge ‘misinformation’ and those who question ‘the truth’. The thin end of a very wide authoritarian wedge.

It seems critical analysis and open debate are fine as long as those involved keep within the framework of what is deemed supportive of the narrative. Chomsky was correct on that.

We are often urged to ‘trust the science’ and accept that the ‘science is decided’ on various issues. We heard this on the COVID issue, when we were told governments are ‘following the science’, while they and the big tech companies censored world-renowned scientists and opposing views and opinions. In ‘following the science’, conflicts of interest were rife and notions of objectivity, open disclosure and organised scepticism – core values of scientific endeavour – were trampled on.

Those who questioned the COVID narrative were smeared, shut down and censored – the playbook of Big Pharma, Big Tobacco, Big Ag and authoritarian governments down the years.

Is anyone who questions and wants a more open debate on climate change or whether such change is occurring as stated or will lead to ‘extinction’ to be charged with disseminating misinformation?

Is questioning the orthodoxy of the zero-carbon policy agenda to be shut down and those who challenge it to be labelled ‘extremists’.

Ardern asks: How do you tackle climate change if people believe it does not exist?

But it is also pertinent to ask: How do you tackle it if you accept it exists?

Even if we accept humanity is in trouble and facing a genuine climate emergency, people should at least be able to question the current 'green' agenda based on a 'stakeholder capitalism' strategy (governments and others facilitating the needs of private capital) that has co-opted genuine concerns about the environment to pursue new multi-billion-dollar global investment opportunities - described in the 2020 report [Nature for Sale](#) by Friends of the Earth.

If you read that report, you might conclude that we are witnessing a type of green imperialism that is using genuine concerns about the environment to pursue a familiar agenda of extractivism, colonisation and commodification - the same old mindset, greenwashed and rolled out for public consumption.

For some, things seem set to remain the same - business as usual.

Economic crisis

But in March 2022, BlackRock's **Rob Kapito** warned that a "very entitled" generation of people would soon have to face shortages for the first time in their lives as some goods grow scarce because of rising inflation.

[Kapito said:](#)

"We have a very entitled generation that has never had to sacrifice."

He, of course, was referring to ordinary people, not the high-flying class of the mega-carbon-footprint multi-millionaires and billionaires who will continue to live life to the max and cash in on their various investments and ventures.

Kapito talked about the situation in Ukraine and COVID being responsible for the current crisis, conveniently ignoring the inflationary impact of the trillions pumped into [imploding financial markets](#) in 2019 and 2020 (dwarfing the crisis of 2008) and a moribund economic system his ilk have milked dry to the point of collapse.

Kapito is a co-founder of Blackrock, the world's largest asset manager which exerts enormous influence on monetary policy in the US and Europe. According to [Salary.com](#), Kapito, as the president of BlackRock, made \$26,750,780 in total compensation in 2021. Of this, \$1,250,000 was received as a salary, \$9,700,000 was received as a bonus, \$15,125,180 was awarded as stock and \$675,600 came from other types of compensation.

Neither Kapito nor any of the hegemonic, unimaginably entitled and unelected billionaire class will have to experience any hardships in the coming years. No, they will be responsible for inflicting it on you. The same class of people who designed and profited from a strident neoliberalism based on deregulation and privatisation - a system now in collapse and responsible for the current crisis and the immiseration of hundreds of millions.

In the 1980s, to legitimise the neoliberal agenda, governments rolled out an ideological onslaught, pressing home the notion of individual rights and the primacy of the market.

Now, there is a new ideological shift towards a great reset – again being driven by neoliberalism, this time, its collapse.

Arden’s utterances on the dangers of free speech, the singularity of ‘truth’ and the implicit shift towards authoritarianism must be viewed within the context of managing the economic crisis. What she says reveals how the financial and political elites based on Wall Street, in Washington and in the City of London are thinking.

The authorities fear blowback in terms of mass dissent. Liz Truss, the UK prime minister wants to place ‘legal curbs’ on striking trade unions as many of them take action to counter the ‘cost of living’ crisis. There is also the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act which came into force in June and threatens citizens’ rights, not least the right to protest.

It therefore comes as no surprise that, today, individual rights and free speech are under threat. The ultimate control mechanism would be linking central bank digital currencies to personal carbon footprints, spending and dissent in an age of economic turmoil. Trudeau gave the game away on that when he hit protesting truckers where it hurt most – denying access to their bank accounts.

How long before ‘misinformation’ and challenging ‘the truth’ becomes thought crime and – as Jacinda Arden might put it – ‘cruel to be kind’ actions are taken against those who challenge dominant state-corporate narratives?

Well, not long because we have already witnessed it during the last few years.

Tyranny is the type of ‘kindness’ we don’t need.

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Featured image: Arden speaking during the session “Safeguarding Our Planet” at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, 22 January 2019 (Photo by Foundations World Economic Forum – Safeguarding Our Planet at the Annual Meeting 2019, licensed under CC BY 2.

**Food, Dependency & Dispossession
Resisting the New World Order**



Colin Todhunter

Cover art by Isa Esasi

Read Colin Todhunter's e-Book entitled

Food, Dispossession and Dependency. Resisting the New World Order

We are currently seeing an acceleration of the corporate consolidation of the entire global agri-food chain. The high-tech/big data conglomerates, including Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook and Google, [have joined traditional agribusiness giants](#), such as Corteva, Bayer, Cargill and Syngenta, in a quest to impose their model of food and agriculture on the world.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is also involved (documented in '[Gates to a Global Empire](#)' by Navdanya International), whether through [buying up huge tracts of farmland](#), promoting a much-heralded ([but failed](#)) '[green revolution](#)' for Africa, pushing [biosynthetic food](#) and [genetic engineering technologies](#) or more generally [facilitating the aims of the mega agri-food corporations](#).

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