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Prime Minister Helen Clark will tomorrow attend Nato's summit on Afghanistan in a changing world in which New Zealand and its armed forces try to play a

The Prime Minister will attend the Nato summit in Bucharest, Romania's leafy and pleasantly jaded capital city, once the attention of Nato's nuclear missiles. What a difference 20 years can make.

A less perceptible shift has occurred in New Zealand's world view as well. The policy twist that leads Helen Clark to the Nato tables of power has a double strand — the subtle diluting of our once-proud nuclear-free policy, and an earnest collaboration in the inflated "war on terror" to prove we can pull our (Western) weight and pay the premium for our (national) nuclear freedom.

In the 1980s Labour negotiated a regional nuclear-free zone and then banned nuclear ships in our harbours. And, of lower local profile but greater global significance, it explicitly repudiated nuclear deterrence as a national security strategy.

The United States and its allies, declared David Lange, carried the burden of knowing that the deterrent which defended them would also destroy everyone else if it were used. "No nation," he said, "should carry that burden."

Lange distinguished between nuclear and conventional weapons. "I accept that the state must arm itself with military force to protect its citizens against aggression. I do not accept that the state must for those reasons arm itself with nuclear weapons.

"When we exclude nuclear weapons from New Zealand," said Lange, "we exclude the possibility of a nuclear defence of New Zealand. We do not ask to be defended by the nuclear weapons we exclude and we do not ask any nuclear power to deter any enemy of New Zealand by the threatened use of nuclear weapons against that enemy."

This stance attracted the implacable hostility of the Western nuclear powers. Yet we knew we had adopted a unique and far-sighted stance regarding the first truly global issue humanity had faced.

At the time Nato justified its nuclear deterrence strategy as necessary to contain the expansionist threat of numerically-superior Soviet conventional forces. But with the changed circumstances of a post-Cold War world, the rationale for nuclear deterrence changed as well.

Nato's deterrence strategy was re-packaged to ensure global stability through "war-prevention" — but in truth re-designed as a hedge against any return to military bipolarity and a pre-emption against any terrorist (or other) nuclear weapon acquisition.

Its nuclear forces, says Nato, are now "more fundamentally political", no longer directed towards a specific threat. Maintained "at the minimum level sufficient to preserve peace and stability", they will continue to exist "for the foreseeable future".

But the international community in whose name Nato presumes to speak has a diametrically opposed view of nuclear weapons. In January this year, the UN General Assembly passed three resolutions envisaging a nuclear-free world.

Resolution 62/24 calls for the major powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally. A diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies, says the General Assembly, will facilitate their total elimination.

Resolution 62/32 reaffirms that the use of nuclear weapons would constitute a violation of the charter. It calls upon the major powers to review their nuclear doctrines and reduce the risk of such use through de-alerting and de-targeting policies.

Resolution 62/51 perceives nuclear weapons as posing "the most serious threat to the survival of mankind". It calls for a binding multilateral agreement prohibiting their production and use which will contribute to the climate for negotiations leading to their ultimate elimination.

New Zealand voted against all three resolutions.

How can it be, when our national policy renounces nuclear deterrence for a nuclear-free world, that we oppose UN resolutions envisioning

that goal? The answer is that our UN voting reflects a coldly-calibrated political calculation rather than any enduring concern over policy consistency. In each case, NZ voted in lockstep with Nato countries and Australia — all members of the United States global nuclear alliance structure.

Notwithstanding that in the 1980s we renounced nuclear deterrence, today we vote selectively against UN resolutions renouncing nuclear deterrence. Notwithstanding that in the 1980s we envisaged the possibility of a nuclear-free world, today we vote against the conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention that would achieve this.

The Clark-Goff policy machine patiently explains that such resolutions are pregnant with hidden diplomatic fish-hooks, effectively precluding New Zealand support. Kiwi diplomats make occasional explanations of vote, brief to a point of singularity, opaque to the point of obfuscation. No transparent explanations are posted on the MFAT website.

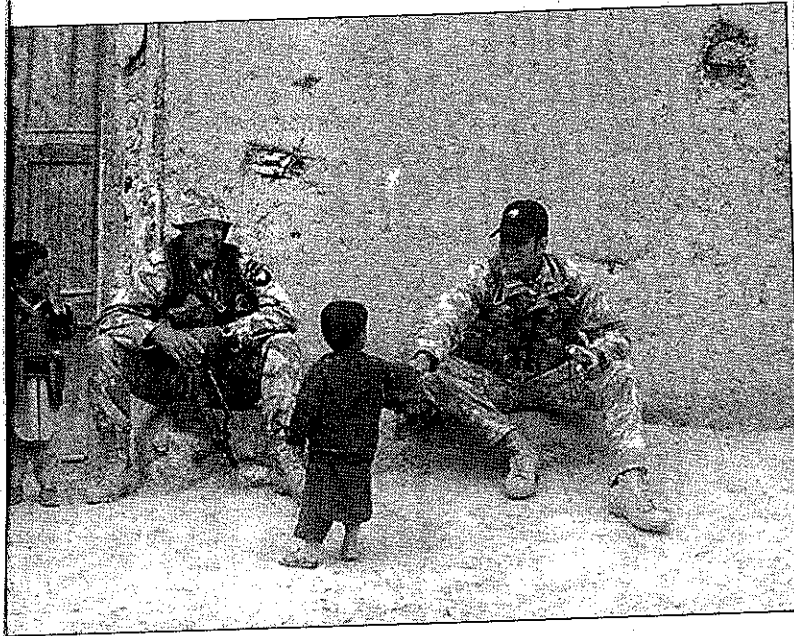
Were it genuinely committed to the nuclear-free goal it used to espouse, the Government would vote for such resolutions, with EOVs explaining any specific concerns and opposing these in paragraph voting.

The reason for such deceptive ploys is purely political. The machine has formed the view that Kiwi voters are satisfied that we successfully stood our ground over nuclear ship visits and that the world now accepts our policy, albeit grudgingly in certain close quarters. We then range alongside Nato countries in UN voting in the belief that a general election at home is indifferent to our arcane voting pattern in New York.

In fact, the reality is the reverse. Our nuclear-free policy today matters less in our national harbours than in UN chambers overseas. That's where the countries of the world assemble and scrutinise one another's policies. It's a cynical ploy to renounce nuclear deterrence at home and support it abroad. But that is what we are effectively doing.

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nistan. DR KENNEDY GRAHAM looks at the
ble.



Mixing with locals: New Zealand soldiers stationed in Afghanistan talk to two young Afghan children. Photo: NZ Defence Force

It is consistent with this approach — the other strand in the strategic helix — that we participate in Operation Enduring Freedom against terrorism in Afghanistan.

Terrorism, as a criminal activity, needs to be vigorously investigated and prosecuted. But so do suspected war crimes, including those that implicated Israel's Moshe Ya'alon, a recent visitor here for whom an arrest warrant was issued by an Auckland magistrate but immediately quashed by Attorney-General Michael Cullen.

Terrorism is no justification for military invasion. The political reaction to 9/11 was understandable. The Taliban, an oppressive regime unrecognised at the UN, was indeed harbouring al-Qaeda. But it did not follow that the international community, in the name of somebody's "self-defence", was right to invade a country.

The UN's nation-building (the Unama operation) is one thing — a constructive and non-aggressive undertaking. The stabilisation force (ISAF) is another — the child of the US-led invasion subsequently adopted by Nato, anxious to roam

out-of-area to prove its continuing *raison d'être* in the post-Cold War world. And Operation Enduring Freedom, the counter-terrorist operation single-mindedly pursued by the US largely beyond UN control, is another thing again. New Zealand should have nothing to do with this.

The Clark-Goff machine seeks to have it both ways. It opposes nuclear deterrence at home to persuade voters that we are doing all we can do down here. And it supports the strategy overseas to persuade Nato and Anzus that we are, just as ever before, part of the Western alliance.

There's something deeply saddening about slowly losing your political soul.

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