

NZ anti-China fearmonger in hot water over ‘inaccurate, inflammatory’ report

One of the leading lights of anti-China McCarthyism Down Under is facing disciplinary action and possibly dismissal from the University of Canterbury (UC) in New Zealand for smearing fellow academics as Chinese agents on the basis of tenuous or invented “links” to the Chinese government and military. The UC management’s decision to conduct a formal review of Professor Anne-Marie Brady’s work has sparked outrage among establishment pundits and politicians throughout the Anglo-American Empire and beyond, who have demanded UC drop its investigation and respect Brady’s “academic freedom”, insisting her work should be subject only to the normal “peer review” process despite Brady having deliberately avoided it. In reality it is Brady herself who is attempting to exert political influence on behalf of a foreign power whose interests are inimical to New Zealand’s own—namely the United States of America and broader Anglo-American political establishment, whose efforts to conscript New Zealand to its New Cold War on China she has spearheaded for several years, in close collaboration with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and other academic fraudsters on this side of the Tasman.

Brady rose to international prominence as a source of grist for the anti-China propaganda mill with her 2017 paper *Magic Weapons: China’s political influence activities under Xi Jinping*, which helped launch the new Cold War. The follow-up paper that sparked the present controversy, *Holding a Pen in One Hand, Gripping a Gun in the Other: China’s exploitation of civilian channels for military purposes in New Zealand*, was published in June of this year. (The first part of the title is an out-of-context quote from a 1958 speech by People’s Republic of China [PRC] founding leader Mao Zedong, in which he warned the intellectual classes that they too must be ready to take up arms should the USA and its allies make war upon China.) Rather than submit it for peer review before publication, Brady submitted her report as evidence to a NZ Parliament Justice Select Committee inquiry into alleged Chinese political interference, exploiting Parliamentary privilege to preclude the possibility of legal action over her libellous claims. The paper was simultaneously published on the website of the Washington, DC-based Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, where Brady is a “Global Fellow”. Like its Australian analogue ASPI, the Wilson Centre bills itself as an “independent, non-partisan think tank” but is nothing of the sort. Created by the US Congress in 1968, the Wilson Centre gets 30 per cent of its funding via an annual government grant, and the rest from private sources, mostly “charitable foundations” and US and international hedge funds and investment banks, whose operations are so opaque that the money might come from almost anywhere. Its Board of Directors comprises a mix of private individuals and US government officials, China-hating fanatic Secretary of State Michael Pompeo among them, all of whom are appointed by the President of the USA.



Anne-Marie Brady. Photo: YouTube

Brady argues that “The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is using civilian links with Western countries to access cutting-edge scientific expertise with military-end-use”, and accuses several academics across multiple universities, including her own, of contributing to this phenomenon. “The [Chinese] People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) rapid militarisation program is accelerating via an international technology transfer strategy, which includes academic exchanges, investment in foreign companies, espionage, and hacking”, she asserts. “Scientists work globally, so by accessing universities or tech companies in states with an advanced technology sector like New Zealand, the PLA can get a foothold within the international network of scholars working on a given subject area ... enabling [agents] to launch from there to the United States, UK, or other states. Similarly, a Chinese company’s purchase of a New Zealand technology company could allow them to acquire a local identity, which they could then use to operate internationally.” Therefore, she says, “New Zealand commercial and educational links with PLA-affiliated organisations and individuals raise national security, as well as reputational, ethical and intellectual property [IP] risks. Some of these links potentially breach New Zealand’s international commitments and domestic laws.”

Paranoia and innuendo

Most of the academics Brady names are Chinese nationals who are or were based in New Zealand, and who have either returned to China or have roles with universities there. It is therefore disingenuous to claim that any work they might do in China constitutes the transfer of IP from New Zealand, when the truth is more like the other way around. But as with the recent, *Australian* newspaper-engineered flap over similar academic exchanges between China and Australia,¹ no concrete evidence of individual, let alone organised, IP theft or spying is provided; instead the thesis is simply asserted as fact, of which all subsequent predicates become “proof” by default. This is entirely unsurprising given that a major source for the *Australian’s* purported exposé, ASPI boy-wonder

“strategic analyst” Alex Joske, was also a key contributor to Brady’s report and her most-cited individual source. “I am grateful to Alexis Joske, ASPI, for generously sharing a list of New Zealand PLA connected papers from his study on the PLA and technology transfer from the West and for reading the paper in draft form”, Brady wrote in a post-script. So much for peer review!

Like Joske, Brady misrepresents routine academic practices as somehow nefarious, simply because China or Chinese are involved. “Using Scopus, Alex Joske’s research on links between the PLA and researchers in Five Eyes states [USA, UK, Australia, Canada and NZ], found that between 1998-2020 New Zealand scientists published 70 research papers with research partners at PLA-affiliated universities”, she wrote. “Sixteen papers were published in 2018, nine in 2019, and so far, seven were published in 2020.” How this can have anything to do with IP theft is anyone’s guess, given Scopus is merely a database of peer-reviewed scientific literature (the world’s largest), collated by Dutch information and analytics company Elsevier and available to literally anyone on Earth armed with an internet connection and the cost of a subscription. Nor do any of Brady’s so-called case studies of various companies, universities and individual scholars unearth any evidence of wrongdoing. For example, Prof. Wang Ruili of NZ’s Massey University, whose professor’s chair there was sponsored via a 2017 grant from Iflytek, a Chinese artificial intelligence company. (Iflytek is also involved in co-development programs via NZ government “business incubator” The Icehouse, including with a majority government-owned robotics company. Both arrangements, of course, have therefore passed muster with the NZ government and its security and intelligence agencies, which would have nixed them in a heartbeat had they found anything untoward, and the same may be said of a score of other commercial, intergovernmental and academic arrangements of which Brady complains.) She then goes on to list the activities of several of Prof. Wang’s past and present PhD students *in China* and/or the work they did before or after studying with him, as though this had implied anything about his own activities in New Zealand. Similarly, University of Auckland materials scientist Prof. Gao Wei—a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand who was named an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2016—is painted as a Communist plant and recruiter of agents, simply because he holds an honorary professorship at China’s National University of Defence Technology and once went to an event in Auckland organised by the Chinese government’s “Thousand Talents” international talent-scouting program, which was also attended by two ethnic-Chinese members of Parliament. Other academics of non-Chinese ethnicity are cast as potential turncoats or dupes—one of whom, electrical engineer Prof. Ross Badcock of Victoria University in Wellington, is also involved in high-level projects with the USA’s National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Department of Energy—apparently solely on the basis that they have either taught at or been awarded honorary professorships by Chinese universities.

On the institutional level, Brady uses similar guilt-by-remote-association innuendo to construe every cooperative technological research project in sight as an illicit contribution to China’s military modernisation. Bizarrely, Massey University also comes under fire for supposedly aiding the (actually non-existent) oppression of Uyghur Muslims in China’s northwestern Xinjiang region, by virtue of its having worked with Xinjiang’s Shihezi University on a program to improve sheep genetics. Even more bizarrely, Brady devotes more than a full page of her 28-page screed to attacking NZ film production and special effects company Weta Workshop for having worked on two successful Chinese-made movies, the 2016 fantasy *Great Wall* (co-produced by Hollywood giant Universal Pictures) and 2017 action film *Wolf Warrior II*, the latter off the back of a joint film production agreement “signed by the CCP government’s agency in charge of censoring the Chinese media”—and its NZ counterpart, of which every government has an equivalent, but of course she doesn’t mention that.

Backlash at last

Whereas her collaborators in Australia have yet to face any official consequences for their lies, Stuff reported 15 August that UC had launched an official review of Brady’s work after receiving what Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ian Wright described as complaints about her “manifest errors of fact and misleading inferences” from academics named in her report. Meanwhile, a University of Auckland spokeswoman told Stuff that Brady’s assertions and inferences about Prof. Gao were flat wrong, given he “had *never conducted military research* in or for New Zealand, China, or any other country” (emphasis added). Nor, she added, was there any evidence of any unlawful transfer of research or technology to China. “In China, as in the US and most Western countries, it is common for universities to receive research funding from agencies connected with defence departments in their countries or elsewhere”, the spokeswoman said. “They do so because these agencies share a common interest in fundamental scientific questions not because the universities are undertaking applied research for defence departments. In this sense, and in this sense only, many Western universities have ‘military links’.” And as Victoria University Vice-Provost Prof. Margaret Hyland confirmed, “The research that our staff have undertaken, in partnership with individuals associated with the Chinese organisations named in the article, *has been published extensively and the information is available in the public domain.*” (Emphasis added).

A follow-up article on 23 October, after Stuff had acquired copies of the various complaints via a freedom of information application, revealed that Victoria University had also accused Brady of making allegations about its involvement with Chinese telecommunications manufacturer Huawei. “Victoria said Huawei did not provide the wireless internet infrastructure across its multiple campuses and the university was not a partner, as alleged, in an intranet between China and New Zealand”, Stuff reported. The complaint read, in part: “These unsubstantiated assertions and outright falsehoods

constitute a serious breach in accepted standards of scholarship. We find it most unprofessional to name individual ... researchers without providing those individuals with an opportunity to respond or clarify the information in the report itself. ... [Brady's allegation are] inaccurate, inflammatory and potentially defamatory."

Ironically, Brady's defenders have demanded in an open letter that UC management drop their investigation and unreservedly apologise, on the grounds that "We know of no valid basis for any 'review' of Professor Brady's work other than by her peers ... as is normal for academic research and publication", despite Brady having deliberately subverted that process. Signatories include red-baiting "Wolverine" ALP Senator Kimberley Kitching; *Sydney Morning Herald* editor Peter Hartcher and Charles Sturt University's Prof. Clive Hamilton, whom the *Australian Alert Service* has exposed as propagandists directed by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) to peddle an "enemy image" of China to the public;² Prof. James Leibold of La Trobe University in Melbourne, an ASPI Senior Fellow and regular contributor of China scare-stories to Australian media; and Adrian Zenz, who originated the fantasy of "Uyghur concentration camps" in Xinjiang in his capacity as a researcher for the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, another US government-funded think tank.³ All share or outdo Brady's shoddy methods, and would doubtless regard the unwanted scrutiny of her work as a shot across their own bows.

By Richard Bardon, Australian Alert Service, 11 November 2020

Footnotes

[1] "Canberra unveils next phase of New Cold War vs China", AAS, 2 Sept. 2020.

[2] "The China Narrative Part Four: ASIO's disinformation campaign", AAS, 17 Sept. 2020.

[3] "China detaining millions of Uyghurs? Serious problems with claims by US-backed NGO and far-right researcher 'led by God' against Beijing", *The Grayzone*, 21 Dec. 2019.