

New Zealand: Anti-China propagandist Anne-Marie Brady speaks at Victoria University of Wellington

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On October 23, Victoria University of Wellington's (VUW) Stout Research Centre hosted a public talk by Professor Anne-Marie Brady, a leading figure in New Zealand's intensifying anti-China campaign.

In the past two years, Brady, who is based at the University of Canterbury, has gone from relative obscurity to become New Zealand's most prominent commentator on foreign affairs, frequently cited in the NZ and Australian media and by publications like the *New York Times* and the UK *Guardian*. Last month she received the "Global" category in 2019 Women of Influence Awards, sponsored by Westpac bank and media company Stuff Limited.

Brady's meteoric rise is bound up with Washington's escalating push to more fully align New Zealand with its economic war, military encirclement and ever-more belligerent threats against China. Brady has criticised successive National and Labour Party governments for developing close economic and political relations with China, which is now New Zealand's largest trading partner. She has called for strengthening NZ's alliance with the US, including its role in the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing network.

Brady's views closely resemble those of the right-wing nationalist New Zealand First, the most vocal anti-Chinese party, which plays a key role in the Labour Party-led government of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. NZ First leader Winston Peters was made deputy prime minister and foreign minister when he decided to form a coalition with Labour in October 2017.

At the Wellington meeting, attended by nearly 100 people, including students and academics, the chair began with a surprise announcement that it was being held under "Chatham House rules," meaning Brady should not be quoted. The WSWs rejects this attempt to ban critical discussion of the meeting, which had not been announced prior to the event. There was no vote taken and no reason given for suppressing independent reporting.

Students and workers must have the right to know about, and be able to challenge, the pro-war propaganda that is increasingly being spread at universities. In August, VUW's Centre for Strategic Studies hosted a visit by NATO leader Jens Stoltenberg, who gave a rant glorifying US and NATO military spending and demonising Iran, Russia and China.

The main message of Brady's 30-minute talk was that New Zealand must work with "like-minded states," namely the US and its allies, to prevent "a China-dominated global order" and maintain the existing "rules-based order," set in place by US imperialism. She rejected the notion that the Cold War had ended in the 1990s and declared that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was engaged in "hybrid warfare" characterised by "political interference" in western countries through "united front" organisations.

Brady called on the NZ government to initiate a campaign against the local Chinese-language media, aimed at countering its alleged pro-Beijing line, and to cut ties with Confucius Institutes, which teach Mandarin and sponsor Chinese cultural programs. Brady also referred darkly to the Chinese Students and Scholars Association, which operates at NZ universities, as a CCP "united front" group.

Brady criticised VUW and Massey University's research links with China. Without giving any evidence, she asserted that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) could benefit from "research that's of military interest" in New Zealand, declaring, "you would be surprised at the scale of connections there are, which was encouraged under our government policy of so-called science diplomacy with China."

These accusations echo the McCarthyite campaign underway in Australia, where politicians and much of the media are demanding that universities cut ties with China and demonising Chinese students as potential agents of the CCP.

While Brady says her proposals are aimed at "protecting" New Zealand's Chinese community of about 200,000

people from the CCP, she advocates major attacks on their democratic rights, including surveillance by the Security Intelligence Service. In her submission to the Ardern government's Select Committee Inquiry into Foreign Interference in May, Brady called for voting to be restricted "to citizens only," stripping voting rights from tens of thousands of immigrants who are permanent residents.

During the question and answer period, a WSWs correspondent asked whether China could legitimately view the US trade war and vast military build-up in the Indo-Pacific region as a threat. Brady replied that she was "concerned about the pressure that the US puts on us to shape our policies" and said she wanted an "independent foreign policy."

A second WSWs reporter pointed out that Brady supports the Five Eyes, demanded SIS surveillance of Chinese groups, and that her think tank, Small States and the New Security Environment (SSANSE), receives NATO funding. The reporter asked whether Brady's activities could be "more accurately defined not as objective academic work but as propaganda on behalf of the United States, which is preparing for war against China?"

Brady angrily dismissed the question as an "insult to my academic integrity." She protested she is "not in a NATO think tank," but admitted in the same breath that NATO funded "airfares for a couple of people to attend conferences" and assisted some international academics to take part in SSANSE.

In fact, far from opposing US imperialist "pressure," Brady is herself a conduit for such pressure, in New Zealand and internationally. Brady boasted that she had "visited 16 different countries to talk about my research, some of them multiple times, since 2017."

Brady has close ties with the US political and foreign policy establishment. She explained that a key turning point in her career was during her time in Washington DC, where in 2014 she became a fellow at the Wilson Center, a major US government-funded think tank. Brady also developed her ideas in discussions with Dr Anthony Smith, a senior New Zealand diplomat in Washington. Later, in 2017 and 2018, she organised private meetings for "academics, policy makers, politicians and some top graduate students" to discuss New Zealand's relations with China.

Last year, former US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton publicly praised Brady for "sounding the alarm" about the "new global battle" with China. Randall Schriver, the Trump administration's assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs, also told the media he had discussed Chinese "interference" with Brady.

Brady first received significant media attention for her paper "Magic Weapons," published just before the

September 2017 election, which attacked the then-National Party government as "soft on China" and implied that many of its leading members had been bought off. Without presenting any evidence, Brady accused Chinese-born National Party MP Jian Yang and Labour's Raymond Huo of being CCP "agents," calling for the SIS to investigate them.

The election resulted in a significant political shift to the right. During four weeks of coalition talks to form a new government, US Ambassador Scott Brown publicly criticised the National Party's failure to endorse Trump's threat to "totally destroy" North Korea. While all parties in parliament support the alliance with the US, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Labour was clearly seen by Washington as more reliable in preparing for war against China.

Following Brown's comments, NZ First formed a coalition with the Labour Party instead of National. The Labour-NZ First government, which also includes the Greens, has strengthened the alliance with the US and ramped-up New Zealand's military and diplomatic presence in the Pacific region, directed against China.

Brady, supported by most of the media, including "left" commentators such as the trade union-funded *Daily Blog*, is now demanding the further strengthening of the spy agencies and a full-scale witch hunt against Chinese "influence activities," which would effectively place the country on a war footing against China.

The exposure of this propaganda campaign is an essential part of the *World Socialist Web Site's* fight to build a new anti-war movement in the working class, based on socialism and internationalism.



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