

Inquiry into the 2019 Local Elections and the Liquor Licensing Trust Elections, and Recent Energy Trust Elections, Justice Select Committee, 2020

Submission from: *Professor Anne-Marie Brady*

My qualifications to speak on this topic:

I am a specialist in the politics of the People's Republic of China (PRC, China) and the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Party-State system; as well as in polar issues, Pacific politics, and New Zealand foreign policy. I have published eleven books and more than fifty scholarly papers on these topics.

I was educated in Auckland, Shanghai, and Canberra, and am a fluent Mandarin Chinese speaker with dual degrees up to PhD level in Chinese Studies and Political Science and International Relations. I am employed as a Professor in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Canterbury. I am a Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC, a non-resident Senior Fellow at the China Policy Institute at the University of Nottingham, and a member of the Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (New Zealand).

I have taught graduate and undergraduate courses at East China Normal University, Tsinghua University, Wuhan University, Beijing University, and Renmin University.

My comments in this submission are based on conclusions from my research published over the last thirty years. In researching these papers and books I referred to many thousands of Chinese-language CCP materials and the comments I make here are based on those sources, as well as secondary sources on the CCP's foreign interference activities.

My submission:

My submission to the Justice Select Committee Inquiry into the 2019 Local Elections and the Liquor Licensing Trust Elections, and Recent Energy Trust Elections focuses on:

1. The law and administrative procedures for the conduct of the 2019 local elections, with particular reference to irregularities or problems that could have compromised the fairness of the elections.
2. The recommendations in the Justice Committee's report on the 2016 local and 2017 general elections.

This submission provides:

1. An overview of China's foreign interference activities;
2. Suggestions for a resilience strategy for local and central government.

My submission focuses on foreign interference activities by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and government of the People's Republic of China (PRC, China),¹ as my relevant expertise for this inquiry is on China and the organisations and policies of the CCP Party-State-Military-Market nexus. Since information about how China's political system works and China's foreign interference activities are not well-known, I will draw on some of the work in my submission for the 2019 Justice Select Committee Inquiry into Foreign Interference, as well as new information relevant to this current inquiry.

I would like the opportunity to give an oral presentation before the Justice Select Committee on my written submission.

Part One: An Overview of China’s Foreign Interference Activities, with Particular Reference to Local Government

The New Zealand government defines foreign interference as “coercive, deceptive, and clandestine activities of foreign governments, actors, and their proxies, to sow discord, manipulate public discourse, bias the development of policy, or disrupt markets for the purpose of undermining our nations and our allies.”² NZSIS and GCSB provided advice on foreign interference activities in New Zealand to the Justice Select Committee in April and August 2019 in unclassified and classified briefings, as well as briefings to the leader of the Opposition.

Local governments are an important focus for CCP foreign political interference activities for a number of reasons:

- They are able to make independent planning decisions on infrastructure and investments; which could undermine the policy of the central government.
- There is often overlap between local and central government politicians and political parties, as well as economic and political elites.
- Local governments can be used by CCP interference activities to suppress individuals or organisations regarded as a threat by the CCP government.
- Local governments can be used to pressure central government to pursue policies that suit PRC interests.
- Local governments do not have foreign policy expertise or advisors, or access to regular national security briefings.
- Local Governments control water rights and land use.

China’s Foreign Interference Activities

The term used by the CCP government to describe what outside observers call “foreign interference” is: “united front work” (统一战线 tongyi zhanxian).³ United front work incorporates “international united front work” (国际统战工作 guoji tongzhan gongzuo),⁴ as well as “foreign affairs work” (外事工作 waishi gongzuo—efforts directed at non-Chinese foreigners),⁵ and Overseas Chinese affairs work (侨务工作 qiaowu gongzuo).⁶ United front work also targets religious and ethnic minorities. United front work is the CCP’s main method for coordinating and controlling political elites outside the Party.

United front is a Leninist concept, which Mao Zedong perfected and eventually turned a doctrine, and an essential tool of CCP rule and foreign policy. United front work now plays a crucial role in China’s increasingly assertive foreign policy, which follows a three-pronged approach:

1. State-to-state relations
2. Employment of military shows of force
3. Covert operations, which include international united front work activities.

CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has increased the resourcing and prominence of united front work within the CCP political system.⁷ In 2015, the CCP launched the Central United Front Work Leading Small Group,⁸ chaired by Wang Yang,⁹ to coordinate united front work across all Party and State agencies.¹⁰

United front work is an all-of-CCP activity (全党的工作 *quandang de gongzuo*),¹¹ meaning that all Party members and all Party agencies are required to participate in it.¹² The main CCP organisations engaging in united front work activities are the CCP United Front Work Department, which directly controls the main organisations devoted to co-opting the Chinese diaspora; the CCP International Liaison Department, which is more focused on ‘party-to-party’ influence activities; and the Central Propaganda Department. The Ministry of State Security, and the People’s Liberation Army are also directly involved.¹³

The CCP describes its approach to foreign policy as “total diplomacy” (全面外交 *quanmian waijiao*) meaning that every possible channel will be utilised. Nearly all of China’s listed internet companies have Party committees. Close to 70 percent of the CEOs of China’s major corporations are now CCP members.¹⁴ Some 70 percent of foreign companies operating in China have a CCP cell.¹⁵ Under China’s National Intelligence law, all Chinese citizens and companies, as well as foreigners and foreign companies operating in China, are required to provide access, cooperation, and support for China’s intelligence-gathering activities.¹⁶

Thus, CCP united front work—political interference activities—is able to draw on the resources of the CCP, the Chinese state, the PLA, and the private sector in China, as well as Chinese companies abroad -- what I refer to *in toto* as the Party-State-Military-Market nexus. Under Xi Jinping, the CCP has sought to reassert its control over the business sector. Party control is now to the fore.¹⁷

I have categorized Xi-era united front work activities into four vectors:¹⁸

1. Efforts to control the Chinese diaspora, to utilise them as agents of Chinese foreign policy and suppress any hints of dissent.
2. Efforts to coopt foreigners to support and promote the CCP’s foreign policy goals and to access information and technical knowledge.
3. Promotion of a global, multi-platform, strategic communication strategy aimed at promoting China’s agenda and suppressing critical perspectives on the CCP and its policies.
4. Rolling out of the China-centred economic, transport and communications strategic bloc known as the Belt and Road Initiative.

NZSIS have also discussed a number of vectors for foreign interference which parallel the four priorities highlighted above. In their initial submission to the Inquiry into Foreign Interference, SIS highlighted: Cyber-enabled threats to the New Zealand General Election, the use of social and traditional media to spread disinformation; building covert influence and leverage over politicians and political parties, including through electoral financing; and the exertion of pressure or control of diaspora communities.¹⁹ In a subsequent testimony in August 2019, Director-General of Security NZSIS, Rebecca Kitteridge, highlighted foreign interference via the vector of “relationship-building and donation activity by state actors and their proxies that concerns us. This activity spans the political spectrum and occurs at a central and local government level.”²⁰

1. Efforts to control the Chinese diaspora

New Zealand currently has a population of around 200,000 citizens and permanent residents who identify as Han Chinese, as well as smaller numbers of other ethnic groups within China, such as Tibetans and Uighurs. The ethnic Chinese permanent residents and citizens of New Zealand are a diverse group; with many coming from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, or elsewhere. Their families may have emigrated to New Zealand before 1949, and many of those who did originally migrate from the PRC left there to escape the politics. But if they wish to be part of Chinese-speaking community activities in New Zealand, then they have to put up with the CCP government’s efforts to control the ethnic Chinese community and tightened censorship of the Chinese language media in New Zealand, especially since Xi Jinping came to power.

When discussing these issues, it is important to understand that the Chinese people living in China and the Chinese diaspora are the victims of CCP control efforts, and also to make a distinction between the CCP government and the Chinese people. The CCP does not equal China.

The CCP adopts a carrot and stick approach to the Chinese diaspora community: financial opportunities and honours for those who cooperate; intimidation, denial of passport or visa rights, harassment for family members living in China for those who do not. Uighurs living abroad,²¹ Tibetans, and activists from the Han Chinese community,²² are under intense pressure from the PRC representatives in New Zealand, as in other countries.

Some of the key agencies involved in this vector:

The CCP United Front Work Department (UFWD); the UFWD’s Overseas Chinese Affairs Office; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of State Security; PLA military intelligence; Chinese People’s Consultative Conference; the Zhigong Party (Chee Kung Tong, sometimes misleadingly referred to as the Chinese Freemasons), and the other “democratic” parties within the CCP-led political system whose main function is united front work; the Federation of Industry and Commerce; and the Peaceful Reunification Association.

Policies:

- *Exerting control over Chinese diaspora individuals and groups in order to “turn them into propaganda bases for China”.*²³ Xi Jinping stated that he wants to utilise the 60 million plus Chinese diaspora to serve the CCP’s political and economic agenda.²⁴ The CCP government’s Ministry of State Security (MSS) and PLA military intelligence use academic links as a cover for their activities, while business links are also a common vector.²⁵
- *Establishing Chinese community organizations that report directly to the CCP.*²⁶ The most well-known of these groups is the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification, which has branches all over the world, including New Zealand.
 - Each major city in New Zealand has branches of united front organisations such as New Zealand Hubei Association, the New Zealand Guangdong Association, which keep a watch on local diaspora populations and provide connections for Party-State individuals and organisations engaged in foreign interference activities in New Zealand.
- *Utilising business connections to further united front work.* China’s National Intelligence Law (2017) obligates Chinese citizens and companies to assist China’s intelligence work.²⁷ There are many examples of this in New Zealand, as detailed in my Supplementary Submission 2 to New Zealand Parliament Inquiry into Foreign Interference (2019). Here I will highlight three prominent examples: New Zealand entrepreneurs Zhang Yikun, Christine Che, and Gan Kaiwan who have frequently been endorsed by the Chinese government as senior representatives for united front work in New Zealand.²⁸
 - In 2017 and 2018, Zhang Yikun, founder of the New Zealand-branch of one of China’s most influential front organisations, the Chaoshan General Association of New Zealand, allegedly gave two \$100,000 donations to the New Zealand National Party, which is now the subject of an investigation by the Serious Fraud Office. Zhang has also donated to the New Zealand Labour Party, though like his National Party donations, the donations do not appear in New Zealand Electoral Commission statements.²⁹
 - Christine Che, also known as Che Weixing, is a wealthy property developer, and deputy chair of the Peaceful Reunification Association of New Zealand, and many other united front organisations. Ms Che has also been a major donor to both the National Party and the campaign of Auckland mayor Phil Goff.
 - Christchurch-based entrepreneur Dr Gan Kaiwan,³⁰ runs the New Zealand-China International Training Center, which provides letters of

invitation for visas and study tours for Chinese officials, among other activities.³¹

- In 2013, Dr Gan was honoured by the New Zealand government with a MNZM, and Christine Che was awarded a QSM; in 2017, Zhang Yikun was awarded a Local Hero medal at the New Zealander of the Year Awards, and then in 2018, an MNZM, all for services to New Zealand-China relations.
- *Using diplomatic cover for united front work.*³² Each PRC consulate and embassy has several staff members designated to engage in united front work activities. The PRC Ambassador or Consul-General always plays a very prominent role in united front work. The CCP has a long tradition of party and government personnel “double-hatting”; holding roles within multiple agencies.³³
 - The PRC Auckland Consulate Cultural Attaché leads a group in charge of planning, coordinating and controlling the New Zealand Chinese media.³⁴ The Commerce Commission manages the issue of media monopolies in New Zealand. Yet there is no law in New Zealand against a foreign nation controlling a sector of New Zealand’s media via editorial instructions and other pressures.
 - PRC consulates and embassies relay CCP instructions to diaspora Chinese united front organisations such as the Chaoshan Association, the Peaceful Reunification Association and the myriad of other united front work organisations which operate in New Zealand, in order to ensure they follow Chinese government policy and to mobilise them for political interference and political influence activities. PRC diplomats also host visits by high-level CCP-government delegations visiting New Zealand to pass on oral instructions to local Chinese united front organisations.
- *Setting and policing the boundaries on Chinese culture in diaspora communities.*³⁵ The CCP specifically excludes: Falungong, Tibetan Buddhism, Taiwanese identity, Hakka, Hong Kong identity, Cantonese or other regional languages or cultures from this official version of Chinese culture.³⁶
 - An example of this is the politicising of the Lunar New Year, a festival celebrated by many people across Asia. Since 2012, the CCP has promoted the festival as “Chinese New Year” and used activities associated with this for local government united front work.³⁷
 - Similarly, successive PRC representatives in New Zealand have politicised a local New Zealand customary festival, the annual Christmas-time Santa Parades, forcing local governments to block participation by Falungong or any other group unacceptable to the Chinese government.³⁸

- *Controlling and monitoring overseas ethnic Chinese students and scholars, and utilising them for united front work—regardless of their passports—by means of the Chinese Student and Scholars Association.*³⁹ In countries where this organization is publicly identified as a united front organization, promoting organizations such as the Western Overseas Scholars Association,⁴⁰ or quasi-commercial groups such as the New Zealand Talent Alliance and Heytour New Zealand.⁴¹ Chinese government agencies such as Ministry of Public Security (Police) and Ministry of State Security (secret police) sometimes use student visas and visiting fellowships at universities as a means to do other activities. Private language schools can also be used as a channel to bring in government personnel for other purposes.
- *Inserting CCP-supported diaspora business and societal leaders as political candidates (华人参政); pressuring foreign-based diaspora politicians already in government to promote CCP policies and provide information on the policies of the governments they represent.*⁴² While it is completely normal and to be encouraged that the Chinese diaspora in each country seek political representation; the initiative to insert the CCP's own representatives into foreign political systems is different from that spontaneous and natural development.
 - New Zealand's 2016, and 2019, local government elections had a number of instances of candidates with clear CCP united front connections, and mayoral candidates who received funding from figures involved in united front work organisations. Currently the Serious Fraud Office is investigating both Auckland Mayor Phil Goff, and Christchurch Mayor Dalziel's election expenses and income.⁴³
- *Imposing CCP censorship controls over the Chinese diaspora media (海外华文媒体融合).*⁴⁴⁴⁵ Regardless of who owns a foreign Chinese language media outlet or China-focused media outlet, it must conform to CCP censorship guidelines, or it will be forced to close by means of intimidation such as removal of advertising or vexatious court cases.
 - For public sector Chinese-language media platforms such as VOA Chinese or BBC Chinese, the means of control appears to be via targeting key personnel for co-option or pressure. Among the few exceptions to this situation are the Falungong's media outlets and Vision Times in Australia that remain independent.
 - During the local government elections in 2019, New Zealand's Chinese-language media heavily promoted pro-CCP ethnic Chinese candidates, as they had also done in the 2017 general election.

- *Popularising the use of China's social media app Wechat (微信), and payment platforms Wechat Pay and Alipay accounts in foreign countries.*⁴⁶ Wechat now makes up 34 percent of all online traffic in China.⁴⁷ As of 2018, New Zealand had 180,000 Wechat users⁴⁸--which is the equivalent of an account for almost every New Zealand Chinese resident.
 - The outcome of the widespread adoption of Wechat outside China is the creation of a backdoor means to control China-related discourse in foreign countries through self-censorship, monitoring of content, and the threat of closing down foreign Wechat accounts that do not comply.⁴⁹
 - As it was in the 2017 general election,⁵⁰ Wechat was an important forum for foreign interference activities during the 2019 local government election. However, the New Zealand government agencies whose job it is to monitor election fairness do not have qualified staff or sufficient resources to monitor these breaches.

2. Foreign elite capture

The CCP has a comprehensive strategy to target foreign economic and political elites, in order to get them to promote China's foreign policy agenda within their own political system, to encourage them to relay information on foreign government intentions, strategies and the attitude of key actors towards China, as well as to provide access to cutting-edge technology.⁵¹

Some of the key agencies involved in this vector:

CCP International Liaison Department, Ministry of State Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, state and city governments in China, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), major PRC corporations and some foreign-based Chinese owned corporations, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Hanban and the Confucius Institutes, Chinese People's Institute for Foreign Affairs, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICR), along with many other such CCP front organizations.

Policies:

- *“Using the local to support the centre”*: utilising sister-city relations, local government investment schemes, and connections with indigenous groups to influence central governments and promote China's agendas. Local governments and indigenous authorities have decision-making power over key resources such as water and land use and for establishing infrastructure projects.
 - The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC, Youxie, 友协)—a united front organization—is in charge of China's sister city relations. Since 2015, CPAFFC has run an annual China-New Zealand mayoral forum. The theme for the 2020 China-New Zealand Forum will include the topics of climate change and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Xi Jinping's signature project. BRI is a China-centred political and economic bloc,⁵² one that will reshape the global order.⁵³
 - In 2016, the Key-English government (2008-2017) signed a non-binding agreement to discuss BRI with China, but the New Zealand Coalition government (2017-) has not signed any agreements to develop BRI projects in New Zealand, nor does it show any indications of doing so. In Australia, the Federal government opposed the BRI, while the Victoria State government signed an agreement to develop BRI projects. Similarly, while the New Zealand Coalition government is only giving lip service to the BRI in New Zealand, Local Government New Zealand is in a partnership with the New Zealand China Council to work on New Zealand local government's involvement in BRI.⁵⁴

- *Utilising former senior foreign politicians and community leaders as bridges to current administrations.* By offering them access to the CCP leadership and to business opportunities and vanity projects in return for supporting China's policies, providing information, or at the very least, offering silence on critical issues; appointing foreigners with access to political power to directorships in Chinese companies such as PRC banks, companies or SOEs in the host country.
 - Sir Bob Harvey, former mayor of Waitakere, heads the New Zealand One Belt One Road Promotional Council, which is acting as a matchmaker in potential BRI infrastructure projects in Auckland. In a 2017 interview, Harvey said, "The possibility of the One Belt One Road projects in New Zealand, which are massive, seems to me to be a gift to the future. I am totally committed to the China philosophy of One Belt One Road." Harvey said the "failure of the American system" meant that "China holds the balance of wisdom and I think China will save the planet".⁵⁵
 - Until 2019,⁵⁶ the former mayor of Christchurch, Sir Bob Parker was Chairman of Huaxin, NewUrban Group Christchurch New Zealand, a Joint China/New Zealand property development and trading company, and CEO of Huadu International Construction NZ Co. Ltd,⁵⁷ the China partner is Huadu Construction, a Hebei-based former State-Owned Enterprise owned by the Wang family, Wang Shiping and his son Wang Jianping.
 - Eugene Feng, former Head of International Partnerships with the Christchurch City Council's Christchurch Development Corporation, was from 2015-2018 general manager of NewUrban Group, and is currently Director of Huadu's Christchurch-based Talent International Institute,⁵⁸ one hundred percent owned by Wang Jianping and with joint company director of former University of Canterbury Deputy Vice Chancellor Ian Town and Beijing-based Zhao Yu.⁵⁹
 - Huadu's New Zealand subsidiary is involved in multiple projects in Christchurch, including apartment blocks, the Christchurch health precinct, and the Port Hills Adventure Park. Huadu own the Christchurch Chinese-language media company *New Zealand Messenger*, which is edited by the daughter of *Wang Jianping. *NZ Messenger*, a paper with a tiny circulation, broke two major news stories recently: in 2019, pictures and information on Simon Bridges meeting with the minister in charge of China's secret police, Guo Shengkun, and then in 2020, news that the New Zealand National Party had once again selected Dr Jian Yang (famous for having hidden his history of 15 years in Chinese military intelligence) as a

List MP for the 2020 election. *Wang Jianping's anonymous donation to Christchurch Mayor Dalziel's 2019 mayoral campaign is currently under investigation with the Serious Fraud Office.⁶⁰

- *Utilising foreign politicians, academics, and entrepreneurs to promote China's policies and viewpoints in the media and academia, or at the very least, not raise critical views.* This is called "using foreign strength to promote China" (利用外力为我宣传 liyong waili wei wo xuanchuan).
 - Building up asset relationships with susceptible individuals via China-based political hospitality at all-expenses-paid conferences, paid talks, paid and unpaid 'advisory' roles and consultancies. If necessary, compromise prominent individuals via: hacking of devices used while in China, bribery, honey traps, or use intimidation tactics such as denial of visas to China.
 - Using mergers, acquisitions, and partnerships with foreign companies, universities, and research centres to acquire local identities that enhance political influence activities, and provide access to military technology, commercial secrets, and other strategic information.
 - Creating economic dependencies in susceptible economies via preferential terms of trade or directed mass tourism or mass international education. Use access to the China market as a lever to intimidate foreign central and local governments, such as the pressures put on the New Zealand government by PRC diplomats after New Zealand instituted a travel ban due to the Covid19 epidemic.⁶¹ Use Chinese companies and Chinese citizens to promote this message.
 - Lobbying local government to suppress views critical of the CCP government, or restrict activities with Taiwan, Falungong, Tibet and the Dalai Lama. In my own experience, in 2015, Chinese government officials put pressure on the University of Canterbury, Antarctica New Zealand, Lianne Dalziel the Mayor of Christchurch, and New Zealand diplomats in China regarding my unpublished research on China and Antarctica. Despite New Zealand's Education Act (1989) which requires all government agencies to uphold the critic and conscience role of the academic and the Bill of Rights which upholds academic freedom, all these government agencies and officials complied with the CCP government's request to attempt to censor and blacklist me.

3. Shaping the global narratives about China

The CCP government's go-global, multi-platform, international strategic communication strategy aims to control international perceptions about China and the policies of the CCP government (让党的主张成为时代最强音). All forms of mass communication are utilised, from films and advertising, to new media, academic, and non-academic publications.⁶² The CCP government also contracts foreign PR companies to lead publicity campaigns, famously Hill and Knowlton successfully won the 2008 Olympic Games bid for the CCP government, by claiming that hosting the games would improve the human rights situation in China.

Some of the key agencies involved in this vector:

The State Council Information Office, CCP Central Propaganda Department, Xinhua News Service, CGTN, China Radio International, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, and other relevant party and state organs.

Policies:

- *China's media companies are engaging in strategic mergers and acquisitions of foreign media and cultural enterprises in order to control the global China narrative.* This policy is known as "buying a boat to go out on the ocean" (买船出海).⁶³
 - This policy has made major inroads into Hollywood production, casting, and film distribution,⁶⁴ and in New Zealand too. In 2017, Hengxin Shambala (恒信东方文化股份有限公司)⁶⁵ bought a 25 percent stake in Weta company, Pukeko, citing the advantages of the 40 percent subsidies provided to the company by the New Zealand government.⁶⁶
 - Hengxin Shambala is led by Meng Xianmin 孟宪民,⁶⁷ who worked at the PLA's 54th Institute, now part of China Electronics Technology Group Corporation (CETC, 中国电子科技集团), in the early 1990s.⁶⁸ CETC is one of the PRC's main defence conglomerates; while other institutes are orientated towards the civilian market, the 54th Institute focuses on military communications.⁶⁹ A former director of Hengxin Shambala also has a military background.⁷⁰

- *Offering business opportunities to foreign media and culture companies that enables them to access the China market, but requires them to follow its guidelines.* This has an impact on their products in other markets too, because if a production company makes a television show, advertisement, or film that portrays China in an unfavourable way—even if it will only be shown outside China—this could affect access for products they hope to sell in the China market.
 - Most New Zealand published books are printed in China. New Zealand publishers, along with other foreign publishers who print books in China, are forbidden from printing any books that break Chinese censorship guidelines.⁷¹
 - New Zealand and the PRC signed a film coproduction agreement in 2010⁷² and a television coproduction agreement 2014, China's first with any country.⁷³ In 2017, New Zealand and China signed a joint film production agreement, which states that joint films will be eligible for any government subsidy available in each country.⁷⁴ New Zealand taxpayers are now subsidising China's propaganda films.⁷⁵ The militaristic period drama, *Wolf Warrior 2*, received \$234,000 from the New Zealand taxpayer.
 - The CCP government agency in charge of censoring the Chinese media signed the joint agreement on behalf of the PRC government. Wellywood's partnership with Chinese film and television will require strict observance of CCP censorship guidelines, which means, as has occurred with Hollywood, no China-critical plots and the blacklisting of actors and crew unacceptable to the CCP.
- *Getting China's political language and viewpoints (提法) inserted into foreign public discourse.*⁷⁶ In New Zealand this ranges from the PRC embassy claiming that very few other countries were imposing travel restrictions due to the Covid19 outbreak,⁷⁷ to popularizing discussion of the Belt and Road Initiative with local governments.
 - Raising concerns about China's behaviour is classed by PRC diplomats as: "anti-China) (反华), "demonising China" (中国的妖魔化), promoting the idea of a "China threat" (中国威胁论), "Cold War thinking" (冷战思想), "McCarthyism" (麦卡锡主义), "xenophobia" (排外主义) or "(racial) prejudice" (偏见).

- *Establishing strategic partnerships and sponsorships with foreign newspapers, TV, and radio stations*, to subsidise them and ensure they adopt a CCP-friendly line for China-related news and follows the Chinese media in “telling a good story of China” (讲好中国的故事).
 - In New Zealand, between 2018 and 2019, the PRC ambassador had three opinion pieces published by New Zealand news site Newshub, yet diplomats from other countries say they were turned down when they ask for similar access for their ambassadors.
 - Huawei sponsors NZME, NZ Herald, Stuff NZ and the annual television awards in New Zealand.⁷⁸
 - New Zealand’s local free-to-air television network Channel 29,⁷⁹ aimed at New Zealand Chinese audiences, is owned by World TV, which since 2010, have been in partnership with China Radio International, one of the PRC government’s top two foreign propaganda outlets (the other is CGTN).⁸⁰
- *Using foreign think tanks to shape foreign policy and public opinion on China issues in China’s favour*. The Chinese government and affiliated united front actors have made a massive investment in setting up pro-CCP think tanks and research centres to promote the CCP government’s agenda and collect information on the intentions of other nations.⁸¹
 - In 2017, Auckland Mayor Phil Goff and PRC Consul General Xu Erwen were star guests at the launch of the New Zealand One Belt One Road Think Tank, co-headed by former Wellington mayoral candidate Johanna Coughlan (sister-in-law of former New Zealand PM Bill English) and Labour Party MP Raymond Huo.⁸²

4. A China-centred political and economic order

In 2014, the PRC government launched a project aimed at creating a China-centred political and economic bloc,⁸³ one that will reshape the global order.⁸⁴ The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as One Belt, One Road (OBOR), builds on, and greatly extends, the “going out” (走出去) policy launched in 1999 in the Jiang era and continued into the Hu era, which encouraged public-private partnerships between Chinese SOEs and Chinese Red Capitalists to acquire global natural resource assets and seek international infrastructure projects.⁸⁵ BRI connects into China’s informatisation strategy, which amongst other things, requires global partners to host China’s Beidou GPS ground stations that will enable China to establish fully global C4ISR capabilities, in competition with the US-led GPS.

In 2016, the Key-English government signed a Memorandum of Agreement on BRI with the Chinese government. The agreement “only expresses the common will of the participants to strengthen cooperation and exchanges to support the Belt and Road Initiative.”⁸⁶ Since the 2017 Coalition government formed, NZ has hosted several high profile BRI-related conferences, but the New Zealand Coalition government (2017-) has not accepted any BRI-linked projects.

Some of the key agencies involved in this vector:

National Development and Reform Commission (lead agency), State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other relevant state agencies, Chinese SOEs, Red Capitalists, Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

Policies:

- *Using FDI to enable China’s privileged access to strategic natural resources such as water and oil, and to establish strategic ports, airfields and satellite ground stations to create forward-based military installations.*
 - Gwadar port in Pakistan and Hambantota port in Sri Lanka are the most well-known examples of this.
 - In New Zealand, a Shanghai Pengxin-owned farm in Ashburton was used for a near-space launch by a PLA-connected company Kuangchi Science,⁸⁷ but the New Zealand government’s 2017 Outer Space and High Altitude Law prevents any further such activity.⁸⁸
- *Setting up trade zones, ports, and digital communications infrastructure that connects back to China, creating a China-centred political, digital, and economic order.*

- *Getting foreign governments to do the work of promoting China's BRI to their own citizens and neighboring states* (another version of "borrowing a boat").
- *Working closely with local government and indigenous leaders on BRI projects.* Local governments and indigenous communities such as Native Americans in the US and Canada, Sami, Inuit and other Arctic peoples, and Māori in New Zealand, control considerable natural resources and can influence planning decisions at the local and national level.
 - Because New Zealand's Coalition government has stymied BRI projects at a national level, China's BRI efforts in New Zealand focus on working through Local Government New Zealand, as well as prioritising individual councils.
 - In 2019, at the recommendation of Zhang Yikun, the Far North District Council, led by former National Party MP John Carter, signed a sister cities arrangement with Chaozhou in Guangdong, aimed at in attracting investment for BRI-linked infrastructure projects.⁸⁹
 - Invercargill Mayor Gary Tong has also been in discussions with Zhang Yikun on possible BRI projects for his district.⁹⁰ Hauraki District Council negotiated for a Chinese company to purchase an ice-cream factory, and the Chinese media promoted the deal as a "BRI triumph".⁹¹ This appears to be only rhetoric only. The project began before BRI was launched.⁹²

Part Two: Policy Recommendations for a Local Government Resilience Strategy

The Justice Select Committee has sought specific policy advice on the law and administrative procedures for the conduct of the 2019 local elections, with particular reference to irregularities or problems that could have compromised the fairness of elections, and the recommendations in the Justice Committee's report on the 2016 local elections, with particular reference to:

1. The recommendation that the Government consider giving responsibility for running all aspects of local elections to the Electoral Commission.
2. The recommendation that the Government consider encouraging or requiring the same voting system to be used in all local elections.
3. Feedback on the committee's recommendations on foreign interference.

Irregularities or problems of the 2019 local elections, which could have compromised fairness of election

In this section I will review weaknesses in current regulations governing local government, then discuss my recommendations for a resilience strategy.

- Local government political donations are governed by the Local Electoral Act (2001).
- There is currently no requirement under the act for political donors to local government candidates to be New Zealand citizens, residents, or electors.
- There are currently no restrictions or legislation to deal with lobbying of local government.
- Candidates are allowed to accept anonymous donations up to NZ\$1500. Failure to report the names of donors above this amount attracts a fine that cannot be more than \$5000.
- Candidates who file a return of electoral donations and expenses that is false in any material particular commits an offence and are liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 2 years, or a fine not exceeding \$10,000, if he or she filed the return knowing it to be false in any material particular.
- Interfering with or influencing voters: under the Local Electoral Act, anyone who commits this offence is liable to conviction and a fine not exceeding \$5,000.

- Irregularities in the electoral process should be reported to local government electoral officers, who are responsible for investigating possible offences. They are not allocated any resources to do this monitoring. Having investigated, electoral officers must report possible offences to the police.
 - What would trigger a local government electoral officer to initiate an investigation is not clear. In the 2019 Auckland city election, candidate Morgan Xiao offered small sums of cash on Wechat to voters who agreed to attend a political meeting.⁹³ The Auckland City Council electoral officer did not investigate, though it was reported by the media.
- Electoral officers have no resources to investigate complaints, but must decide whether or not to report the complaint to the police.
- NZ Police appear to have limited resources to investigate reported irregularities in electoral funding. Despite widespread concerns raised in mainstream and social media about the donations Auckland Mayor Phil Goff received at a charity auction in 2016, police did not investigate until they received a complaint in September 2019. Even then, although they had three months to investigate, the police let the inquiry lapse in December 2019, as the three-year limit on prosecutions for complaints about local government electoral expenses had lapsed by that date.⁹⁴ In February 2020, the Goff political funding inquiry and also the Dalziel political funding inquiry file were passed on to the Serious Fraud Office.
 - When complaints are reported to police, it is at their discretion as to whether or not they follow up. In 2019, two candidates in the Marlborough election did not report their electoral expenses on time, yet police did not prosecute them.⁹⁵
- Local government campaign political advertising and social media is governed by the Advertising Standards Authority. It is unknown whether ASA have staff with security-clearance who read Chinese who can monitor the New Zealand Chinese language media.
- The Electoral Commission manages electoral rolls for local and national government elections and thus deals with concerns regarding the residency of political candidates for local government.

- The Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968⁹⁶ manages conflict of interest issues for local government representatives. Any infractions are penalised with fines of between \$100 and \$200. The legislation focuses on commercial transactions between the council and representative's personal businesses; participation in decisions that could affect personal business interests; and use of local authority work time and resources to further personal business interests. The Attorney-General is tasked with investigating complaints related to this Act.
- In 2013, the Attorney General conducted a 6-month inquiry into the relationship between Nelson Mayor Aldo Miccio's role as mayor, and his private business interests with Chinese e-commerce business NZ Inc Shop. In a public letter to the mayor, Nelson District Council wrote that Miccio had brought his "public work into close contact with your personal business interests and that you should have taken more care in the way you ensured proper separation between the two."⁹⁷ There was no prosecution after this behaviour.
- The Serious Fraud Office can investigate and prosecute serious or complex fraud or corruption within local authorities. Legal definitions of what constitutes corruption in New Zealand are narrow and orthodox, while sentences are light.⁹⁸
- A 2017 report by Deloitte said corruption in New Zealand tended to involve: undeclared conflicts of interest, followed by gifts and trips,⁹⁹ along with doing favours, and giving excessive commissions.¹⁰⁰ Twenty percent of the companies surveyed by Deloitte had observed corrupt practices in New Zealand.¹⁰¹

Recommendations

1. The recommendation that the Government consider giving responsibility for running all aspects of local elections to the Electoral Commission

- As shown above, governance of local elections and local government falls between local electoral officers, the Attorney General, the Serious Fraud Office, the Advertising Standards Authority, and NZ Police. Electoral officers have no resources to investigate matters of concern. NZ Police also have limited capacity to police this issue.
- New Zealand should give responsibility for running local elections to the Electoral Commission. It should also set up an Anti-Corruption Commission. New Zealand should reinforce the independence of the Police Commissioner, and provide better resourcing for the Electoral Commission, the Serious Fraud Office, the Financial Markets Administration, the Office of the Attorney-General, and the Ombudsman.
- These agencies should employ security-cleared Chinese-fluent staff, to assist in monitoring work to do with CCP political interference. This will enable these agencies to do a better job of the oversight and education required for protecting New Zealand from corruption and political interference, whether from within, or without.¹⁰²

2. The recommendation that the Government consider encouraging or requiring the same voting system to be used in all local elections

- Participation in local government elections is almost half that of national elections. Local government elections should be held at the same time as national-level elections and they should all follow the same system of voting.
- The voting age should be lowered to 16. Civics knowledge must be included in the school curriculum. The age of consent is 16, 16 year olds can drive, they can get married; they should also be allowed to vote.
- NZ should follow international best practice and limit voting in national and local-body elections to citizens only.
- NZ legislation should prohibit Members of Parliament and local councillors from being members of a foreign political party.
- New Zealand MPs and local government representatives should not be permitted to join, promote, or act on behalf of, CCP united front organisations.
- The Electoral Commission should require political parties to provide evidence they have vetted candidates for political risk.

3. Feedback on the committee's recommendations on foreign interference

Recommendations 35-36: We recommend that the Government ensure that the intelligence agencies proactively provide advice to all parliamentary candidates and their parties which is politically neutral, cost effective, and proportionate to a person's risk of foreign interference.

We recommend that the Government resource the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) and the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) appropriately to allow them to provide advice proactively to local election candidates, local body elected members, and local body officials in a way that is politically neutral, cost effective, and proportionate to the risk of foreign interference in the circumstances.

- SIS must provide protective security briefings to New Zealand local and national politicians, as well as to political parties, iwi, the education sector, scientific researchers and corporate leaders, on protective measures to take if they intend to visit China, as well as on united front work (foreign interference), and on the central government's security concerns about China.
- SIS, MFAT, DPMC, MOD, NZDF as well as other government agencies need to expand their team of security-cleared Mandarin-Chinese fluent, CCP Party-State literate staff.
- Currently the New Zealand government offers an anodyne five-day China Capable "Master Class" for the New Zealand public sector. The five themes of the course are:
 - Who and what is Chinese and what is China?
 - Trade, service and investment
 - Cross-agency crises and challenges
 - Changing China
 - Navigating the future with a China-savvy mind-set¹⁰³
- The China Capable courses are predominantly taught by specialists in Chinese culture and history. The course does not provide participants with an understanding of how the CCP Party-State system works, nor does it address the challenges in the New Zealand-China relationship which have led to a series of legislative and administrative adjustments such as to the Electoral Act and the Overseas Investment Act.
- The course reflects the priorities of the New Zealand Inc China Strategy, which was published by the John Key government in 2012, before Xi Jinping came to power.¹⁰⁴ The strategy is now out of date. The political and economic situation in

China, and globally, has changed drastically since the NZ Inc China Strategy was written. New Zealand must revise its whole-of-government China policies to reflect current realities. China's foreign interference activities in New Zealand, as well as the severe risks posed by New Zealand's economic dependency on China trade which the Covid19 epidemic has revealed, necessitates a full and complete readjustment in China policy: from MFAT, to NZDF, to NZTE, MPI, and all the way to the tertiary and secondary education sectors.

- NZ Police, NZSIS, MFAT, GCSB, Customs, and Immigration need to upskill staff with Chinese language skills, but they should no longer be trained at Confucius Institutes,¹⁰⁵¹⁰⁶ Even the CCP government describe the Confucius Institutes as a propaganda tool. The New Zealand government should end its subsidies to the Confucius Institutes,¹⁰⁷ and encourage them to be self-funding and community-based rather than located in our universities. It should put the subsidies it now offers to Confucius Institutes into New Zealand's own Chinese language programmes.
- All NZ Police, NZSIS, MFAT, GCSB, Customs, Immigration staff should be required to learn about the CCP political system. All of these agencies should employ more security-cleared Chinese New Zealanders

Recommendation 37: We recommend that the Government encourage local authorities engaging with foreign governments to actively seek out advice about foreign interference from the intelligence agencies.

- Local government should not sign agreements with Chinese entities which undermine national policies. But if local governments are not given clear signals from the New Zealand central government about our China policy, then policy mistakes are inevitable.
- There have been a number of occasions in the past when New Zealand local authorities have made decisions which are counter to national security. For example, the sale of Wellington's power supplier to a businessman who works closely with the PLA.¹⁰⁸ The privatisation of Wellington Electricity began under the mayoralty of Fran Wilde and was completed by her successor Mark Blumsky. By 2012, the whole company was purchased by Li Ka-shing. In 2017, Li also purchased Australia's Duet Power company.¹⁰⁹ Duet controls energy assets valued at A\$11.1 billion, a gas pipeline in Western Australia, United Energy in the State of Victoria and energy projects in the US and UK. The PRC State Grid Corp also competed to purchase Wellington Electricity.
- The Prime Minister has overall responsibility for national security. Given the seriousness of the threat that the CCP's political interference activities pose to New Zealand's national security, the Prime Minister should clearly inform local government leaders and the New Zealand public of the risks in the China relationship, as well as the benefits. Amongst other concerns, she and other

relevant ministers, the Minister of Trade and Minister of Foreign Affairs, should make it explicit that New Zealand will not be taking on any Belt and Road Initiative contracts. The continuance of the current policy of “saying but not doing” is causing confusion and risks local governments acting against national interests. The MOA signed with China is simply an agreement to discuss, and nothing more.

- The New Zealand public should be informed on the challenges, as well as the opportunities of New Zealand-China relations. Society has an important role in national security, and an informed society is the means to engage in total defence.

Recommendations 38-39: We recommend that the Government encourage all candidates and parties in general and local elections to seek help to protect their online security

We recommend that the Government adequately fund appropriate agencies to provide specialist advice and support against targeted cyber attacks that cannot be avoided by best practice online.

- The Government must increase public awareness of cyber hygiene and cyber security, particularly for public sector, tertiary education staff and business community personnel visiting China, Russia or North Korea, the main sources of cyber attacks in New Zealand. China's Ministry of State Security, Russian military intelligence, and North Korean-organisations have engaged in malicious cyber activity against New Zealand in recent years.¹¹⁰
- Best practice advice includes: take only a burner phone, leave laptops and tablets at home or take a standalone device, set up a dedicated email for the trip, avoid public wifi, use Tor or other secure browser, purchase a reputable VPN, utilise encrypted email and messaging services. Any devices taken to China, Russia or North Korea should be rebuilt or discarded.

Recommendations 40-42: We recommend that the Government retain manual or paper-based voting systems in local and general elections for the foreseeable future because of security concerns.

We recommend that the Government consider amendments to existing legislation to incorporate an offence, similar to that in section 482 of the Canada Elections Act 2000, that would prohibit hacking into computer systems owned by Parliament, local authorities, the Electoral Commission, election service providers, election officers, political parties, candidates, or members of Parliament with the aim of intending to affect the results of an election. We recommend that the Government ensure that a contingency system is in place in case of a security breach of relevant computer systems that compromises the integrity of a local or general election.

- New Zealand should continue current efforts to partner with other like-minded states to address the challenge of hacking of central and local government computer systems.
- Hacking of government agencies is a counter-intelligence issue. The 2019 cyber attack on health providers in the wider Wellington region, which affected more than a million New Zealanders, demonstrated that the cyber risk to NZ government is about more than state secrets.¹¹¹ The private information available on health files could be used by a foreign state to blackmail diplomats and other sensitive occupations working in the Wellington region, to determine addresses and phone numbers. It could be used to establish a profile on those who have security clearance.¹¹²

Recommendation 43-47: We recommend that the Government consider the applicability of implementing recommendations relating to foreign interference via social media content from the UK House of Commons' Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee's report on Disinformation and 'fake news' and the Australian Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' Report on the conduct of the 2016 federal election and matters related thereto. We recommend that the Government also consider the applicability to local government of the UK and Australian recommendations.

We recommend that the Government follow the Australian Government in prohibiting foreigners from advertising in social media to influence a New Zealand election outcome and that it provide appropriate constraints and legal obligations on social media platforms so that this can be enforced.

We recommend that the Government introduce legislation to allow only persons or entities based in New Zealand to sponsor and promote electoral advertisements. We recommend that the Government introduce legislation creating an offence for overseas persons placing election advertisements as well as organisations selling advertising space to knowingly accept impermissible foreign-funded election advertising.

- The Electoral Commission and Advertising Standards Commission need dedicated, security-cleared, Chinese Mandarin-fluent staff to be watchdogs on NZ-related Chinese language traditional and social media content, not just during election periods, but on an ongoing basis. Vote influencing does not just happen in the 6 weeks before an election. The CCP's disinformation and persuasion campaigns have taken years to build and need to be continually monitored

Recommendations 48-51: We recommend that the Government examine how to prevent transmission through loopholes, for example, shell companies or trusts. We recommend that these issues be further explored and that the Government consult with political parties about how best to approach the problem. Our recommendations about donations from overseas should also apply, as far as possible, to local body elections.

We recommend that the Government consider one over-arching anti-collusion mechanism, including penalties, to replace those in the Electoral Act. We note also that there should be consistency between electoral law and other areas of law concerning the transparency and accountability of financial transactions. We recommend that the Government: make it unlawful for third parties to use funds from a foreign entity for electoral activities; require registered third parties to declare where they get their donations from.

We recommend that the Government investigate whether the Australian Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme is applicable to New Zealand, taking into account the evidence of problems in this area relative to the costs of introducing such a regime.

- Political parties at the national and local levels, as well as independent candidates at the national and local levels, should be required to do due diligence on all donations. The New Zealand Electoral Commission needs to have adequate resources to assist with this.
- Donors must verify that they are the source of funds. Trusts and charities should also be required to be fully transparent about donations.
- Loopholes whereby a candidate can hand over a donation under \$15,000 to a political party or a trust, without having to declare it, must be fixed.
- Donations should be limited to political parties, and not be given to individual candidates.
- Donations from non-permanent residents or non-citizens of New Zealand should be prohibited in both national and local elections.
- There should be total transparency for all donations.
- There should be a maximum amount allowed for political donations.
- Companies should not be allowed to give political donations.

A case study highlighted in the 2019 Justice Select Committee Report demonstrates the risks inherent in our political donation system:

“While Inner Mongolia Rider Horse Industry (NZ) Ltd is a New Zealand-registered company, the ultimate shareholding is in China and the source of funding for the donation made by Inner Mongolia Rider Horse Industry (NZ) Ltd is unclear. It is impossible, without further scrutiny of the flow of funds, for the public to be satisfied that Inner Mongolia Rider Horse Industry (NZ) Ltd was not simply a transmitter for a foreign donor, rather than being the true donor utilising funds derived within New Zealand.” (p. 75)

The NZ National Party raised an objection to the incident being raised on page 76 in the Report:

“National notes that the matters above were not raised in submissions.”

In fact, the Inner Mongolia Rider Horse Industry (NZ) Ltd donation to the Rotorua electorate account of Rt Hon Todd McClay MP was discussed in Justice Select Committee Inquiry into Foreign Interference 2019, Anne-Marie Brady Supp2, “Magic Weapons: China’s Political Influence Activities Under Xi Jinping,” pp. 32-33.¹¹³ It is regrettable that National Party committee members had not made themselves familiar with all the Submissions, especially regarding matters that affected their own party.

Inner Mongolia Rider Horse Industry (NZ) Ltd is part of the Rider Horse group. The main controlling (31%) owner of this group is a state company under the Horqin Right Middle Banner in Inner Mongolia,¹¹⁴ in other words, a branch of the CCP government. Other companies within Rider Horse group such as Mengxing Rider, are controlled 51 percent by an Inner Mongolian Government company, and 49 percent by Mr Lin Lang 林郎, National MP Todd McClay’s political donor.¹¹⁵

The Overseas Investment Act’s definition of overseas person includes: “a company where overseas persons hold 25 percent or more of any class of securities, have the power to control the composition of 25 percent or more of the board, or control 25 percent or more of the voting power at a company meeting.” As noted in the Report, in the Australian Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme (FITS), a company is covered by FITS if a foreign government or foreign political organisation: holds more than 15 percent of the issued share capital of the company; holds more than 15 percent of the voting power in the company; can appoint at least 20 percent of the company’s board of directors; can exercise total or substantial control over the company; or has obliged company directors to act in accordance with its directions, instructions, or wishes. FITS requires individuals or entities who have arrangements with foreign principals, or who undertake certain activities on their behalf, to register and disclose their relationship and activities.

Under a FITS scheme, Inner Mongolia Horse Industry (NZ) would have been required to report its financial relationship with the CCP government.

Recommendation: 52: We recommend that the Government: engage with international social media platforms to encourage them to adhere to our laws and customs regarding free speech explore regulatory tools that would assert New Zealand’s strong tradition of free speech.

- The CCP government is currently the main source of foreign interference activities in New Zealand. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube are all banned in China, though the CCP government is increasingly using these platforms abroad for political interference activities, as well as persuasion.

- However, Wechat is the main CCP social media platform used in New Zealand, as elsewhere in the world. Wechat, as well as Chinese language websites targeted at Chinese-speaking New Zealanders, have widely been used for disinformation and fake news activities in NZ in recent years.¹¹⁶
- The New Zealand Electoral Commission needs to engage with Tencent Corporation, Wechat's parent body, to discuss how to prevent disinformation and ensure balance, accuracy, and fairness in New Zealand's local and central electoral coverage, as well as on other domestic political matters. Netsafe, the Advertising Standards Authority, and CertNZ must be properly resourced and staffed to monitor concerns about Chinese-language content and NZ elections and local and national governance.
- The Prime Minister's Christchurch Call must engage with the leading PRC social media platforms such as Wechat and TikTok, in addition to Facebook and Twitter.

Recommendation 53: We recommend that the Government consider requiring all media organisations to have a majority of board members who live in New Zealand.

- The Press Council, the Broadcasting Standards Authority, the Advertising Standards Authority, the Electoral Commission, as well as central and local government sector staff need to have the resources and training to deal with the risks, as well as the benefits in the New Zealand-China relationship.
- In addition, the New Zealand government and our political parties need to work together to help restore plurality to New Zealand's Chinese community groups and media organisations, in order to:
 - Ensure genuine democratic participation within this community
 - To prevent attempts by CCP united front proxies and individuals from instructing the Chinese community to block vote for candidates
 - To mitigate against the CCP's efforts to engage in political interference activities via targeted donations from its proxy groups and their activists within this community
 - To protect this community against intimidation attempts from the CCP government and its agents in New Zealand.

- New Zealand political parties need to connect with the New Zealand Chinese community as a whole, not just the tiny percentage who collaborate with the CCP government.

Recommendation 54: We recommend that the Government prohibit foreign governments or foreign state entities from owning or investing in media organisations in New Zealand.

- This recommendation is already covered under the revised Overseas Investment Act (2019) which introduced the national interest test for overseas investment. Minister for Trade and Export Growth David Parker specifically said that the new rules may be used “to control investments in significant media entities where these are likely to damage our security or democracy”.¹¹⁷

Recommendation 55: We recommend that, as part of its review of media content regulation, the Government consider requiring all media companies to belong to an industry self-regulating body.

- It should be compulsory for media companies to belong to a media industry regulatory body, but these media bodies such as the Press Council, should also be given some powers. If media companies breach governance rules, they can be de-registered from membership, meaning they are no longer able to operate.
- The definition of “media company” should not only include traditional media such as radio, TV, and print, but also online-only platforms which do not have the accountability and standards under which a newspaper or other traditional media has to operate, but are acting as news sites. For example, Hou Garden, which is a residential property website that offer news information and had promoted slanderous information about PM Ardern and Winston Peters, as discussed in the 2019 Inquiry into Foreign Interference.¹¹⁸

Submission Conclusion

New Zealand needs a holistic, non-partisan, approach to dealing with foreign interference, to respond to the CCP's "whole of Party" effort in united front work. It is crucial that our political parties show leadership on this issue, and not solely focus on party politics and business as usual. *Ma whero ma pango ka oti ai te mahi/ With red and black the work will be complete.*

The political parties of New Zealand must come together, without recrimination, to address the issue of the CCP's interference in our political system. Good progress has already been made via the work of the Justice Select Committee and government agencies, which since 2017, have assessed the risk of China's interference activities, devised NZ's resilience strategy against foreign interference, and since 2018,¹¹⁹ partnered with like-minded states to address the global phenomenon of CCP China and Russian political interference activities.

The next steps forward are to jointly:

1. Readjust New Zealand's overall NZ Inc China strategy.
2. Educate the New Zealand public about the risks, as well as the opportunities, in the China relationship.
3. Pass legislation to bring the electoral systems and governance measures of local government in line with those of central government. There is also a need to assess further legislation that needs to be passed, such as on Arms Exports, to prevent the sale and transfer of military-relevant technology to China.

Getting the China relationship right is currently New Zealand's greatest foreign and domestic policy challenge. New Zealand must manage the risks, as well as the opportunities in the China relationship.

¹ The submission draws on, and builds on, my conference paper "Magic Weapons: China's Political Influence Activities Under Xi Jinping," "The corrosion of democracy under China's global influence, September 16-17, 2017, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/for_website_magicweaponsanne-mariesbradyseptember2017.pdf; and my 2017 policy advice to the NZ government "Looking for Common Points while Facing up to Differences: A New Model for New Zealand-China Relations," <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/media/documents/research/Looking-for-points-in-common-while-facing-up-to-differences.pdf> .

² Hon Andrew Little, Report on Overseas Travel, 27 July 2019-4 August 2019, <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/Travel-Report-Min-Little-Jul19.pdf>

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- ¹² For more on the United Front, past and present see Gerry Groot, *Managing Transitions: The Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism and Hegemony*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2004.
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