

Wise judgement needed in times of closed borders: China expert

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- [Julie Hare](#)

The \$20 billion international education sector could be in the firing line if a “geo-economic” war broke out between the US and China and Australia was seen to side too “blindly and zealously” with the US line, the National Press Club heard today.

Jane Golley, a China expert with the Australian National University said that Australia had to balance its pro-US rhetoric and anti-China messaging, particularly in an era of closing borders and protectionist trade policies.

“International education is very important in this context,” Dr Golley told the National Press Club. “(Chinese president) Xi Jinping can act quickly by simply limiting or stopping student visas. It would be a very quick tool.

“Chinese students might not like it, but I think he would be prepared to do that just to send a message our way.”

China sends about 150,000 students to Australia each year, or about one quarter of all inward bound students.

Dr Golley said China was not shy in using economic tools to show its displeasure at countries which it saw as acting against its national interests.

Dr Golley, who is associate director of the Australian Centre on China in the World, was speaking at a forum looking at US President Donald Trump’s first 100 days and what it meant for Asia.

Dr Golley said while China was using its massive Belt and Road Initiative as a carrot to forge stronger links across the entire Asia Pacific region, she said it was not adverse to using economic sticks to punish those who did not act in its interests.

“It is really important that we are not blindly and zealously following the US line on protectionism,” Dr Golley said.

“So when Malcolm Turnbull defied Trump and said the TPP might go ahead without the US and that maybe China could join, that was a good choice. As to reject China’s formal offer to align the BRI with our Northern Australia infrastructure projects, I’m not so sure that is such a good idea.”

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/wise-judgement-needed-in-times-of-closed-borders-china-expert/news-story/70d82f683596cdaebf242f2aa4ff08da>