

Former Queen's professor accuses Centre for International & Defence Policy of censorship
Professor Bruce Gilley came under fire for publishing a journal article entitled "The Case for Colonialism"

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After controversy arose around a journal article published in September of 2017, a former Queen's professor is claiming the University has enabled censorship against his work.

Professor Bruce Gilley is a former Queen's professor who currently works at Portland State University. For the past 10 years, Gilley has retained a fellowship with the Centre for International and Defence Policy (CIDP) at Queen's University. However, this fellowship wasn't renewed in January, which Gilley asserts is an ideologically-motivated decision by Queen's political studies professor and CIDP director Stéfanie von Hlatky.

Gilley believes von Hlatky chose not to renew his fellowship because she didn't agree with his work. Specifically, he believes it's related to his journal article "The Case for Colonialism," which was published in *Third World Quarterly's* September 2017 issue. The article caused significant controversy because it argued Western colonialism "has had a bad name" and stated that it's time to "question this orthodoxy."

According to the paper's abstract, "Western colonialism was, as a general rule, both objectively beneficial and subjectively legitimate in most of the places where it was found ... [it] can be recovered by weak and fragile states today in three ways: by reclaiming colonial modes of governance; by recolonising some areas; and by creating new Western colonies from scratch."

Following its publication, the article received severe backlash. Fifteen members of *The Quarterly's* editorial board resigned out of protest. As a result of criticism and threats of violence made against Gilley and the journal's editor-in-chief Shahid Qadir, the article was withdrawn from the publication.

In contrast, eight other members of *The Quarterly's* editorial board vocalized support for Gilley, alongside 72 other scholars who didn't condone the uproar against the article. In a letter published in a December of 2017 issue of *The London Times*, the group of academics called the withdrawal of the article a "dangerous precedent for academic freedom."

"We see this as part of a rising tide of intolerance on university campuses and within the academic profession, with certain scholars and students seeking to close down perspectives with which they disagree rather than debating them openly," the letter read.

As a result of his non-renewal for a CIDP fellowship in January, this sentiment is one that Gilley has now alleged Queen's is guilty of. His profile and all of his content has been removed from the CIDP website as a result.

Gilley told The Journal he wasn't informed about his non-renewal and removal from the website. Once he was made aware, he emailed von Hlatky to request an explanation.

In her email response to Gilley, provided to The Journal by the Portland State professor, von Hlatky wrote, "For a small operation like the CIDP to work well, I have to rely on open and transparent communication with my fellows. It's what one might refer to as implicit trust."

Von Hlatky told Gilley the decision to not re-appoint him stemmed from her view that he was not "forthcoming" about the controversy surrounding his journal article. According to her email, she found out via social media and from colleagues.

"I no longer felt I could promote your work through the CIDP because I found this implicit trust to have been broken — having not been informed of what was going on, which had real and serious implications for the CIDP," she continued in her email to him.

In an email to The Journal, von Hlatky explained "[t]he Centre for International and Defence Policy recently elected not to renew the Fellowship appointment of Professor Gilley. Our decision was made after consideration of the administrative relationship the Centre had with Dr. Gilley."

"It was not intended to signal an endorsement or condemnation of his recent paper or his academic views. We respect his right to academic freedom," she continued. "Renewals are not automatic nor guaranteed. The university was under no obligation to renew the fellowship, and proper process was observed. As he is no longer a CIDP Fellow, his profile and related materials were removed from the Centre's website."

He doesn't think the decision was made with any proper basis or under any specific breach of procedures or rules. Gilley — who said the essence of being a scholar is to engage in controversial debate and discussion — believes von Hlatky's decision is contradictory to the role of an academic.

"I wonder how we can possibly understand the role of the scholar as engaging in a breach of trust when they engage in controversial issues," he explained. "This seems to me this is the essence of the scholar's role, so what she's saying is that when the scholar does what the scholar is supposed to do, they're breaching the trust of their institution."

According to the Portland State University professor, the annual renewal process required him to file an annual report on his academic activities and the CIDP would also confirm his scholarly activities align with the interests of the centre. These requirements have not posed an issue in the decade since he first began his fellowship.

"It would have been easy for Dr. [von Hlatky] to simply say, 'I feel your research interests don't align with the centre anymore.' I mean that's typically the way these censorship acts work, but

she was honest enough to say, ‘Actually, I don’t like what you’re writing, it disagrees with my personal views,’” said Gilley.

But Gilley also believes his situation with the CIDP speaks to a larger problem at Queen’s. He said universities aren’t meant to take on or represent a certain ideological position. It’s something he views as undermining the purpose and essence of a postsecondary institution like Queen’s.

“Is the University a centre of debate and freedom and exchange of ideas or is the University itself falling victim to the same sort of totalitarianism?” Gilley questioned.

“A lot of this whole debate is about that bigger issue,” he continued. “Is the University supposed to represent an institutionalization of a certain viewpoint, or is the University supposed to represent a variety of viewpoints where students can learn, challenge, and be exposed to the best worked-up arguments from a variety of viewpoints?”