



THE UNITED STATES AND NEW ZEALAND

Pacific Partners

MARCH 26-27, 2018
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United States and New Zealand

Pacific Partners

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Heritage Hotel Auckland
Auckland, New Zealand

A Conference Report of the CSIS Southeast Asia Program

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Thomas J. Pritzker was named chairman of the CSIS Board of Trustees in November 2015. Former U.S. deputy secretary of defense John J. Hamre has served as the Center's president and chief executive officer since 2000.

CSIS does not take specific policy positions; accordingly, all views expressed herein should be understood to be solely those of the author(s).

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Acknowledgments

In March 2018, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) partnered with the U.S. Department of State and the Centre for Strategic Studies at Victoria University of Wellington to hold a conference titled "United States and New Zealand: Pacific Partners." The conference informed the findings and recommendations in this report, though all opinions and recommendations are those of the CSIS report chairs and do not reflect those of the Centre for Strategic Studies, nor necessarily the conference participants. The conference and this report were made possible with support from the U.S. Department of State.

Contents

Conference Summary and Context	1
Conference Conclusions and Recommendations	3
Annex 1: Conference Agenda	9
Annex 2: Conference Participation List	14

Conference Summary and Context

On March 26-27, 2018, CSIS organized a conference in Auckland, New Zealand—“United States and New Zealand: Pacific Partners”—in partnership with the Centre for Strategic Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. The conference was generously supported by a cooperative grant from the U.S. Department of State.

This conference and gathering of key thinkers from both countries came at an important time for the New Zealand-U.S. strategic partnership. The scope of cooperation between New Zealand and the United States has never been greater—extending beyond traditional defense, intelligence, and public engagement—and it enjoys healthy support among policymakers and the wider public in both countries. Bilateral economic, social, and cultural ties are broad and deep. The two countries work globally to build a more peaceful and prosperous world, including by working together closely to ensure the stability and security of the Indo-Pacific region, by preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and by actively safeguarding and studying the unique natural environment of Antarctica.

Yet the New Zealand-U.S. strategic partnership faces growing external and internal challenges. The United States, New Zealand, and other allies and partners face rising threats globally from terrorism, financial instability, pandemic diseases, and other transnational challenges. Revisionist powers are seeking to reshape regional security dynamics and carve out spheres of influence, jeopardizing the liberal rules-based order that has supported U.S. and New Zealand security and prosperity for more than half a century. The risks of threat miscalculation and conflict are growing, as is the prospect of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time, resources available to solve these problems are constrained by mixed economic growth across the developed world and the cost of supporting aging populations. Economic dislocation and stagnant wages are generating a wave of populist and protectionist sentiment in many parts of the world that risks undermining governance and prompting a return to zero-sum, mercantilist economic policies. Moreover, U.S. political divisions and some policy choices are exacerbating allies’ concerns about the future of—or kind of—U.S. global leadership.

Many of these issues are playing out in the contemporary New Zealand debate, with public conversations on how New Zealand should navigate in this environment, including its partnership with the United States. Recent opinion polls also suggest doubts about U.S.

staying power as well as the region's growing affinity with and economic ties to China. This is broadly consistent with polling from the region suggesting that China's growing economic clout and military capabilities are driving expectations that China will supplant the United States as the predominant power in the Indo-Pacific.

These trends raise new questions about the future of the partnership in domestic, bilateral, and international contexts that we must address. They also highlight the increasingly complex challenges facing U.S. and New Zealand partnership managers; the importance of not taking the strategic partnership for granted; the need for fresh ideas about the strategic partnership; and the need to engage a broader range of stakeholders, including a new generation of strategic thinkers in New Zealand and the United States.

The Auckland conference brought together a group of about 40 participants –including nine young “next generation” thinkers—to discuss the challenges faced by the New Zealand-U.S. relationship. Held under the Chatham House Rule to stimulate frank debate, the conference focused on identifying key conclusions and formulating practical recommendations to improve the capacity and capabilities of the New Zealand-U.S. relationship in the South and Indo-Pacific regions.

Conference Conclusions and Recommendations

Session I: Strategic and Symbolic Assumptions, Then and Now

TAKEAWAYS

New Zealand has been on the United States' strategic radar since the late eighteenth century. The United States was the first country to establish a diplomatic presence in New Zealand in 1838, two years before New Zealand formally joined the British Empire. New Zealand was a strategic location and a participant in the Pacific campaign during World War II, hosting some 140,000 U.S. troops and facing a significant threat from the Japanese advance through the Pacific. Postwar, New Zealand was a foundational member of the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), and remains a member of the crucial "Five Eyes" intelligence partnership.

However, as a result of the Lange government's barring of the USS *Buchanan* due to its anti-nuclear policy and the 1987 *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act*, the United States suspended its treaty obligations under ANZUS towards New Zealand. Although there was a resumption of political and diplomatic exchanges outside the machinery of ANZUS, the United States considered New Zealand to be a non-allied partner. New Zealand therefore became trapped in a paradigm where the symbolism of the ship's barring distracted from New Zealand's genuine contributions to regional and international security. And while relations began to thaw during the terms of Prime Minister Helen Clark and President George W. Bush, with ties growing increasingly warm under Prime Minister John Key and President Barack Obama, relations are still not as close as history and interests would portend, and the two sides do not always see eye to eye.

However, a conference participant suggested there is an outdated perception in the United States that New Zealand is not interested in pursuing a deeper relationship with the United States. Other participants indicated that this perception of disinterest was a likely factor in U.S. public perception that New Zealand has recently drifted towards China. Participants also noted that democratic and liberal values are often being "besieged" or "challenged" in both the United States and New Zealand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **To continue the normalization of and strengthen the New Zealand-U.S. security relationship, both countries should promote common values and interests** by placing greater emphasis and effort on advancing sustainable democracy in the Pacific region.
- **New Zealand and the United States should find a new path for enhancing trade relations.** Although security is an important aspect of the bilateral relationship, the trade relationship is critical, and New Zealand risks being marginalized as the Trump administration adopts more protectionist trade policies. New Zealand made a clear effort to work with the United States under the framework of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and U.S. withdrawal from the agreement was regrettable and should be reconsidered. In the meantime, both sides should find ways to reengage and cooperate commercially and diplomatically.
- **As a close partner on issues affecting Asia and the Pacific, New Zealand** can help the United States to detail and implement the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, particularly how it relates to the South Pacific. For instance, New Zealand can help guide U.S. engagement with regional institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum.
- **Both countries should encourage bilateral engagement at subnational levels.** In particular, New Zealand should engage actively with U.S. governors, mayors, and members of Congress. There are many opportunities for New Zealand to expand its representation and efficacy in developing enduring relations with local actors at a U.S. state level. In doing so, New Zealand representatives can maximize relationships with key U.S. actors.

Session II: Democracy and Government: Competing Visions of the Regional Order

TAKEAWAYS

The difference of opinion between New Zealand and the United States on China's role in the region was a frequent topic of discussion at the conference and was considered to be significant, yet not insurmountable. A recent report from the Asia New Zealand Foundation indicated that China ranks higher than the United States on the list of countries toward which New Zealanders feel "warmest."¹ Yet Western countries, including New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia are becoming aware of the depth of Chinese influence in their political systems. Governments have sometimes been slower to focus on the issue of China's domestic political influence than have scholars and the media. In New Zealand, Chinese influence in politics has not yet been the subject of a constructive and sustained public debate in the same way it has been in Australia. This debate is needed in New Zealand. Governments across the West have been complacent in checking this threat, partly because Chinese influence often involves inducements and profitability, rather than clear intimidation and coercion.

1. Asia New Zealand Foundation, *New Zealanders' Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* (Wellington, New Zealand: Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2018), http://www.asianz.org.nz/reports/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/1179_POA_2018_FA_WEB.pdf.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Distinguishing Chinese influence from Chinese interference.** Influence is a natural aspect of a country’s political, economic, and military power, whereas interference crosses the line into coercion and corruption. It is important to highlight the difference between these two forms of power.
- **Enhance exchanges and dialogues on the nature of Chinese influence and interference in New Zealand and the Pacific.** Although New Zealand is not a treaty ally of the United States, it is a member of the crucial “Five Eyes” intelligence partnership, which offers a platform to deepen exchanges on these issues.
- **Allied governments should outwardly commit to transparency** by legislating to prevent illegitimate outside political interference, exposing instances of coercion, and calling for greater transparency in interstate relations. In doing so, allied governments can diminish the threat of coercive behavior.
- **The public debate around China should be nuanced and not driven by fear and xenophobia,** distinguishing Chinese people from the actions of the Chinese Communist Party and voicing legitimate criticism of problematic behavior by organs of the Chinese state apparatus.
- **The United States and New Zealand should play a leadership role in reframing the current debate to one about foreign interference in sovereign countries.** Sovereign states have the right to push back on interference with domestic affairs. Some conference participants noted China’s hypocrisy in demanding independence in their internal affairs while openly seeking to influence the internal affairs of other states.

Session III: Regional Security—Opportunities and Challenges in Asia

TAKEAWAYS

Commitment to regional and global multilateral institutions such as the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been a key feature of New Zealand’s foreign policy. President Donald J. Trump has indicated his preference for bilateral negotiations rather than multilateral forms to promote his “America First” agenda. This can feed into an inaccurate, but increasingly widespread, narrative that the United States is uninterested in global leadership and does not see the utility of multilateral institutions.

Compounding this issue, the past five years have seen a marked change in the Chinese government’s approach to regional and multilateral forums, exploiting its influence to stifle criticism of Chinese global assertiveness; for example, its militarization of the South China Sea. China’s strategy of neutralizing or undermining the legitimacy and independence of multilateral institutions disadvantages smaller states across the Indo-Pacific region, particularly those in the South Pacific, where China is also mounting a renewed push to “flip” countries that recognize Taiwan.

Participants noted that there has been a genuine effort on behalf of the United States to integrate China into the global economic order and major multilateral institutions. The

sheer size of China's economy, however, means that when it challenges the rules, this has a pronounced systemic effect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The United States and New Zealand should cooperate in building critical people-people ties that reinforce their common interests in the South Pacific and in East Asia.** Participants noted that the United States needed to be noticeably engaged in the region and that public diplomacy was an effective counter to the perception that the United States is disengaging.
- **The broader public and political debate around New Zealand's strategic options should not be reduced to a "choice" that New Zealand must make between the United States and China.** There needs to be a greater recognition by politicians, however, that China's growing power and assertiveness in the region means that New Zealand and Pacific Island nations are likely to be confronted with a series of smaller choices.
- **The U.S. and New Zealand governments should build public awareness that New Zealand defense strategy is predicated on the United States remaining engaged as the regional stabilizer.** The stability necessary for New Zealand and the region's prosperity is tied directly to sustaining the U.S. military, diplomatic, and economic presence in the Indo-Pacific region.

Session IV: The United States, New Zealand, and the Region's Evolving Economic Architecture

TAKEAWAYS

Trade and investment are means to multiple ends. The prosperity of the rules-based international order is anchored in the global network of transparent and open trade agreements. However, the architects and proponents of the current system have not adequately made the case for the continuation of these large-scale political and economic arrangements. As a result, the stresses and strains on the current system are worsening.

Adding to these tensions, the rules and best practices of the international system are not clear for emerging states. It is imperative that allied and partner states develop a refreshed narrative regarding the upholding of the international rules-based order and embark on a sustained effort to persuade their own populations and other countries—particularly emerging states—of the benefits of the international system and the need to adhere to trade rules and best practices.

Conference participants highlighted that the signing of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) was, however, an indication that partners and allies can work together in support of the international order even absent U.S. leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **New Zealand should work with likeminded countries to influence U.S. behavior and actions.** New Zealand can work through regional forums such as APEC to shape U.S.

engagement with the Pacific region. Where appropriate, New Zealand should support the international trading system by taking infractions—whether by the United States, China, or other countries—to the WTO.

- **The United States and New Zealand should work together to challenge problematic aspects of Chinese economic influence in the South Pacific by demanding transparent and fair deals.** China’s commitment to economic reform is neither consistent nor transparent, which is concerning to U.S. and other investors and business leaders.
- New Zealand should embrace its role as a leading economic partner in the South Pacific and work with its partners like the United States to safeguard economic and political stability in the region.
- **Governments with an interest in maintaining the international rules-based order should harmonize their business regulations.** Regulatory coherence is important for business and investment confidence. Advancing a common framework adhered to by partner nations, businesses, and investors can maintain their confidence in robust and transparent systems.

Session V: New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific

TAKEAWAYS

China is rapidly increasing its presence and influence in the Pacific, which risks reducing New Zealand’s traditional influence and undermining its interests. China is less constrained than Australia and New Zealand—the region’s traditional sources of development assistance—by budget processes and Western aid standards, and unencumbered by historical baggage in the region.

Needing infrastructure and the flows of economic assistance, governments in the Pacific may not see the downsides of Chinese aid, including debt dependence, lower labor and environmental standards, and corruption. Nonetheless, China’s offering is perceived as coming with less stringent conditions and is increasingly attractive.

The public debate about the nature of the U.S.-China regional relationship often merely focuses on its most tense and competitive aspects, which accentuates and feeds into the incorrect narrative that New Zealand faces a “choice” between China and the United States. To counter this advantage, New Zealand and the United States should coordinate their efforts with likeminded countries such as Australia, Japan, and France. They should eschew a “one size fits all” approach to development assistance in the Pacific in favor of tailored solutions that meet the requirements of individual Pacific nations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **New Zealand and the United States should take an approach of assisting Pacific nations that balances long-term, strategic investment with the agility to respond to evolving local needs and China’s activities.**
- **New Zealand should leverage its leadership on gender equality to push the United States, China, and other Pacific nations to promote and support gender**

development initiatives. Support for increasing the political representation of women across the Pacific region is an incontestable public good.

- **The United States and New Zealand should focus cooperation on complementary lines of effort** that include illegal fishing, good governance, and natural disaster preparedness for the overall betterment of the South Pacific region, without playing into U.S.-China competition discourse.

Annex I: Conference Agenda

United States and New Zealand: Pacific Partners
March 26-27, 2018
Auckland, New Zealand

Day 1: Monday, March 26

8:30 a.m. **Registration**

9:00 a.m. **Mihi Whakatau**

9:10 a.m. **Welcome Remarks**

Remarks by:

Ambassador Scott P. Brown

U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa

9:30 a.m. **U.S.-New Zealand Partnership in a Changing Global Order**

What role has the bilateral relationship played in U.S. and New Zealand strategic thinking? How has this evolved over time in each country? What is the contemporary role of the relationship in U.S. and New Zealand strategy? What are the key global challenges ahead as seen from Wellington and Washington? How can public support for the relationship be maintained?

Framing Remarks by:

Mr. James Clad MNZM

Senior Fellow for Asia
American Foreign Policy Council

Dr. Charles Edel

Senior Fellow and Visiting Scholar
United States Studies Centre

Mr. Simon Murdoch

Senior Fellow
Centre for Strategic Studies

Ms. Fran O’Sullivan
Editorial Director, Business
The New Zealand Herald

Moderated by:

Dr. David Capie
Director
Centre for Strategic Studies

10:45 a.m. **Tea and Coffee Break**

11:05 a.m. **Challenges to Democracy and Governance**

What are the challenges and opportunities for U.S. and New Zealand policymakers in dealing with a politically pluralistic Asia-Pacific region? How can the United States and New Zealand work together to encourage democratic and accountable political practices in the region? What are the best ways to promote respect for human rights and safeguard the integrity of domestic political processes in an era of multiple external and transnational challenges?

Remarks by:

Mr. John Garnaut
Analyst
JG Global

Professor Anne-Marie Brady
Professor of Political Science
University of Canterbury

Moderated by:

Dr. Amy Searight
Senior Adviser and Director, Southeast Asia Program
CSIS

12:20 p.m. **Group Picture**

12:30 p.m. **Lunch Conversation on the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy**

Remarks by:

Mr. Walter Douglas
Deputy Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of State

Moderated by:

Mr. Andrew Shearer
Senior Adviser on Asia-Pacific Security and Director, Alliances and American Leadership Project
CSIS

2:00 p.m.

Regional Security: Opportunities and Challenges in Asia

How does the relationship contribute to upholding the regional order in the Indo-Pacific? What are the major threats and challenges facing the regional order? Is the relationship affected by tension with North Korea, and if so, how should the United States and New Zealand respond? How can the United States and New Zealand work with regional partners to build partner nation capability and capacity across the Indo-Pacific? Will the changing relationship between the United States and China likely to lead to closer U.S.-New Zealand ties or act as a wedge between the two?

Framing Remarks by:

Dr. Zack Cooper

Senior Fellow for Asian Security
CSIS

Mr. Bruce Klingner

Senior Research Fellow
Heritage Foundation

Professor Robert Ayson

Professor of Strategic Studies
Victoria University of Wellington

Associate Professor Beth Greener

School of People, Environment and Planning
Massey University

Moderated by:

Mr. Andrew Shearer

Senior Adviser on Asia-Pacific Security and Director, Alliances and American Leadership Project
CSIS

3:15 p.m.

Tea and Coffee Break

3:35 p.m.

The U.S., New Zealand, and the Region's Evolving Economic Architecture

What are the best ways to highlight and further strengthen bilateral economic linkages? In a time of rising protectionism across the region, are there ways that New Zealand and the United States can promote high standard trade and investment rules in the Asia Pacific? What will be the economic implications of the CPTPP and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) for bilateral and regional trade and investment?

Framing Remarks by:

Mr. Matthew Goodman

William E. Simon Chair in Political Economy and Senior Adviser for
Asian Economics
CSIS

Mr. Eric Brown

Senior Fellow
Hudson Institute

Dr. Tracey Epps

Trade Law Consultant
Chapman Tripp

Mr. John Ballingall

Deputy Chief Executive
New Zealand Institute for Economic Research

Moderated by:

Dr. Amy Searight

Senior Adviser and Director, Southeast Asia Program
CSIS

4:50 p.m. **Adjourn**

6:15 p.m. **Informal Dinner**

Day 2: Tuesday, March 27

8:30 a.m. **Arrival Tea and Coffee**

8:45 a.m. **New Zealand, Australia, and the South Pacific**

The United States is a dialogue partner of the Pacific Islands Forum. How can the United States work with New Zealand and other regional states to spur development and enhance their engagement in the region? What are the priority issues for Pacific countries that require Wellington and Washington's attention? What actions can be taken to address insecurity, inequality, women's empowerment, ocean preservation, and climate change?

Framing Remarks by:

Dr. Gregory Brown

Adjunct Professor, Center for Australian, New Zealand & Pacific Studies
Georgetown University

Dr. Anna Powles

Senior Lecturer in Security Studies, Centre for Defence and Security Studies
Massey University

Dr. Iati Iati

Senior Lecturer in Political Science
University of Otago

Moderated by:

Associate Professor Yvonne Underhill-Sem

Director, New Zealand Institute for Pacific Research
University of Auckland

10:00 a.m. **Tea and Coffee Break**

10:20 a.m. **Perspectives from Next Generation Leaders on Global Issues**

How will the next generation of policy leaders understand the challenges and opportunities of the U.S.-New Zealand relationship? On which issues should the United States and New Zealand work more closely? What policies should the United States and New Zealand explore to address these issues? Next generation participants will provide perspectives on conference proceedings and highlight issues on which they feel should receive additional attention. These insights will inform the subsequent discussion regarding policy recommendations.

11:05 a.m. **New Zealand and the United States: Partnering in the Region on Key Security and Regional Challenges**

What are concrete recommendations for closer bilateral cooperation on key shared challenges? What opportunities and challenges are likely to affect the implementation of changes to the relationship?

Moderated by:

Dr. David Capie

Director
Center for Strategic Studies

Dr. Amy Searight

Senior Adviser and Director, Southeast Asia Program
CSIS

Discussion of Recommendations

11:50 a.m. **Program Concludes**

Annex II: Conference Participant List

Professor Robert Ayson

Professor of Strategic Studies
Victoria University of Wellington

Mr. John Ballingall

Deputy Chief Executive
New Zealand Institute for Economic
Research

Professor Anne-Marie Brady

Professor of Political Science
University of Canterbury

Mr. Eric Brown

Senior Fellow
Hudson Institute

Dr. Gregory Brown

Adjunct Professor, Center for Australian,
New Zealand & Pacific Studies
Georgetown University

Dr. David Capie

Director
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Mr. James Clad MNZM

Senior Fellow for Asia
American Foreign Policy Council

Ms. Fiona Cooper

Executive Director
New Zealand United States Council

Dr. Zack Cooper

Senior Fellow for Asian Security
CSIS

Ms. Marianne Dutkiewicz

Legal, Policy, and Technology Impacts
Analyst

Dr. Charles Edel

Senior Fellow and Visiting Scholar
United States Studies Centre

Dr. Tracey Epps

Trade Law Consultant
Chapman Tripp

Mr. John Garnaut

Analyst
JG Global

Mr. Travis Gidado

Yenching Scholar
Peking University

Mr. Matthew Goodman

William E. Simon Chair in Political Economy
and Senior Adviser for Asian Economics
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Associate Professor Beth Greener
School of People, Environment and Planning
Massey University

Mr. Leon Grice
Chairman
New Zealand United States Council

Professor Natasha Hamilton-Hart
Department of Management and
International Business
University of Auckland

Mr. Joshua Hauraki
Freyberg Scholar
Australian National University

Mr. Mike Hearn
Executive Director
American Chamber of Commerce in
New Zealand

Dr. Manuka Henare
Associate Professor
University of Auckland

Capt. Sophie Hollingsworth
Fulbright Anne Wexler Scholar
University of Sydney

Mr. James Hurdell
Research Associate
Centre for Strategic Studies

Dr. Iati Iati
Senior Lecturer in Political Science
University of Otago

Mr. Stephen Jacobi
Executive Director
New Zealand International Business Forum;
New Zealand China Council

Mr. Bruce Klingner
Senior Research Fellow, Northeast Asia
Heritage Foundation

Ms. Pip McLachlan
Director, Engagement & Research
Asia New Zealand Foundation

Mr. Jared Mondschein
Research Fellow
United States Studies Centre

Mr. Matthew Morrison
Coordinator
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Mr. Simon Murdoch
Senior Fellow
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Ms. Fran O'Sullivan
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Ms. Sarah Pereira
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Pacific Research
University of Auckland

Mr. Keoni Williams

Program Assistant
Pacific Forum CSIS

Dr. Jason Young

Acting Director, New Zealand
Contemporary China Research Centre
Victoria University of Wellington

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