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Donald Trump’s victory in the US election was, in significant part, a result of the inability of Democrats, the media and political pundits to view Trump as anything other than an irrational and impulsive firebrand. A less hysterical and emotionally-driven reaction to Trump’s campaign would have provided a sounder basis for defeating him. This is because there was a strategic thread running through Trump’s bellicosity that practically every Democrat and liberal failed to see. His often contradictory statements on a range of issues bewildered his opponents, diverting attention away from the cunning strategic moves he was making throughout the campaign. This article outlines some often overlooked reasons behind Trump’s victory, some of which may surprise.

The first element of Trump’s success lay in his choice of personnel. Specifically, after weeks of controversy that embroiled Trump’s first campaign manager, Corey Lewandowsky, Trump made a surprising change. On 17 August his campaign announced that long-time Republican campaign manager and pollster, Kellyanne Conway, and executive chair of Breitbart News, Steve Bannon, would be brought on board. Conway would act as Trump’s campaign manager, while Bannon was elevated to chief executive. The differing reputations of the two could not have been starker. Conway was widely respected across the Republican establishment as a professional and measured operator. Bannon, on the other hand, was seen as the ultimate outsider and mischief-maker: a man who had presided over the transformation of Breitbart News from a conservative website that characterised itself as ‘the Huffington Post of the right’ into a champion of what is now known as the ‘alt-right’, a movement that embraces American (often white) nationalism, rejects mainstream conservatism and opposes immigration, multiculturalism and political correctness.1

To most people, the ideas Bannon represented went against the tide of history, where liberal democracies such as the United States (and New Zealand) embrace openness and tolerance.

To outsiders, the Bannon–Conway tandem seemed the oddest of pairings, and one destined to generate dysfunction at the highest levels of Trump’s campaign. But the shakeup was made precisely when it was called for. It followed the nadir of his campaign in the middle weeks of August. At this point Nate Silver’s 538 election forecast website (which successfully forecast the results of every US state during the 2012 US election) gave Trump only a 10.8 per cent chance of winning the presidency.2 After the rearrangement of senior personnel in his campaign, chance of success would never reach such a low point again.

The personnel change had the effect of shoring up Trump’s position and would ultimately sharpen Trump’s campaign messaging. For a start, by having Conway on board, it sewed up his flank with parts of the Republican establishment, who had threatened to abandon him in droves. Conway not only performed as Trump’s manager but also acted as his surrogate repeatedly on America’s largest cable news networks. You could not turn on Fox News, CNN or CNBC for long before Conway appeared and delivered defences of Trump’s outlandish rhetoric and positions with a measured and sure tone that conveyed reassurance.

Bannon, for his part, and irrespective of his controversial stewardship of Breitbart News, had his finger on the pulse of the American electorate. In 2014 Bannon delivered a speech via Skype to the Vatican, where he explained that one of the motivating forces behind the rise of populist parties in the West was economic forces unleashed by the tide of globalisation that had been extending across large parts of the globe since the 1980s, and that seemed to work against working class people. Bannon

Donald Trump made a number of key strategic decisions during his election campaign. Contrary to the common view that his campaign was marked by incompetence and dysfunction, there is considerable evidence that he made adroit decisions at key times. These were overlooked and dismissed by his political opponents to their ultimate disadvantage and defeat. If the Democratic Party hopes to take back the White House in four years’ time, and the wider world wants to understand the ‘Trump phenomenon’, it is imperative that we look at the logical thread that underlies Trump’s seemingly irrational behaviour.
stated that through this crisis of capitalism, a centre-right populist movement was emerging out of the working classes opposed to the elites that ran their countries. To Bannon, Breitbart News was the platform for this voice in America. Bannon would take this insight with him into the Trump campaign and make Trump’s appeal to the working classes of America razor sharp.

The Conway–Bannon strategy played out to great effect, allowing Trump-leaning voters to see in Trump’s behaviour what they wanted to see. This was evident during Trump’s seemingly bizarre trip to Mexico on 31 August to meet and hold a press conference with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto. Prior to this, Trump had said that Mexican migrants crossing the border have lots about problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

Despite this earlier rhetoric, Trump was calm during the press conference, leading some to suggest that Conway was making real progress in restraining ‘the Don’. However, Trump followed his subdued trip to Mexico by delivering a raucous immigration speech to his followers in Arizona on the same night, during which he reaffirmed his hard-line immigration policy and declared that Mexico would pay for a wall along the US–Mexico border. This had all the hallmarks of Bannon’s influence. In the space of a single day Trump had made an unprecedented trip to Mexico, where he acted with moderation, showing that he was capable of acting presidential to moderate Republican voters hesitant about voting for him, and also showed his base with diehard fans at his Arizona rally that he was not abandoning his core hard-line immigration policy.

Trump would utilise this contradictory approach over and over again throughout the campaign to great effect, reassuring both his moderate and hard-line supporters that he remained committed to them even if his behaviour was, at other times, contradictory. Owing to their success, Conway and Bannon have been rewarded handsomely by Trump, with Conway offered a job as counsellor to Trump and Bannon now acting as Trump’s chief strategist in the White House.

A third key member of Trump’s team that led him to victory is his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who harnessed social media to the campaign’s advantage. Kushner and his digital team utilised low-tech policy videos that garnered 74 million hits. Micro-targeting inundated Trump-leaning voters with his blunt messaging and enabled the campaign to sell hats and t-shirts with Trump’s ‘Make American Great Again’ slogan, turning people into human billboards. Trump’s campaign expenditure is a testament to this, as spending on traditional television and online advertising was marginalised in favour of using Twitter and Facebook to drive the campaign to get the message out and monitor the shifting mood of voter sentiment. Trump’s Federal Election Commission filings through to mid-October showed that he only spent up to the Republican primaries, major news media delivered an likely ‘doomed him’. Yet a study from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government showed that throughout 2015 and in the lead-up to the Republican primaries, major news media delivered an unusually high volume of coverage despite Trump’s low polling numbers at the time. Furthermore, Trump received more good press than bad, helping to elevate him to the top of Republican polls. Other analysts claim that the media coverage he received during the primaries totalled $2 billion in free advertising. Another study at the University of Wisconsin explained that Trump proved himself uniquely able to satisfy the imperative of dominating the news agenda, entering the news cycle… and repeatedly re-entering it, with stories and initiatives so that subsequent news

Media role

The US media played a major role in the creation of the Trump phenomenon. Personally, I was stunned during a trip to Atlanta early last year when I saw that both Fox News and CNN would broadcast Trump speeches in full during prime time television. This allowed his message to reach millions of Americans who would otherwise not be paying much attention to the election (it is hard for us to understand in an outwardly-focused nation like New Zealand but many Americans do not follow their country’s politics very closely). The cable networks, driven by profits, were only too willing to shower attention on Trump, aware of the massive ratings and advertising revenue this would generate. Speaking on the role his channel played, CNN Chief Jeff Zucker publicly admitted that

We probably did put on too many of the campaign rallies in the early months unedited… in hindsight we probably shouldn’t have done that as much… We put them on because we never knew what he was going to say. They did also attract quite a bit of an audience.

Rather than realise that this was an enabler for Trump to deliver his message into the deepest reaches of the American homeland, the US media missed the mark.

A typical story of this was released by Politico which, writing about Trump’s dominance of the airwaves, suggested that it had likely ‘doomed him’. Yet a study from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government showed that throughout 2015 and in the lead-up to the Republican primaries, major news media delivered an unusually high volume of coverage despite Trump’s low polling numbers at the time. Furthermore, Trump received more good press than bad, helping to elevate him to the top of Republican polls. Other analysts claim that the media coverage he received during the primaries totalled $2 billion in free advertising. Another study at the University of Wisconsin explained that Trump proved himself uniquely able to satisfy the imperative of dominating the news agenda, entering the news cycle… and repeatedly re-entering it, with stories and initiatives so that subsequent news
In other words, Trump played the media like a fiddle, and it redounded to his immense benefit. When the media did eventually turn on Trump and began fact checking him and calling him a serial liar, it could not prevent his victory as Trump turned his attention to using social media to get his message out. No doubt, Trump was aided by the fact that a majority of the American populace no longer trusted the mainstream media, with a Gallup poll in September showing that only 32 per cent of Americans trusted the media ‘to report the news fully, accurately and fairly’, the lowest level on record in Gallup polling history. Ultimately, to Trump, any exposure was good exposure, and he manipulated the public’s thirst for outrage to his advantage unlike any political candidate in modern times.

Effective campaigning
Another key element of Trump’s strategy involved that most fundamental method of electoral politicking — campaigning. Throughout a gruelling 2016 schedule Clinton held approximately 278 rallies and speeches compared to Trump’s 302. Trump’s speeches were, on average, larger, with the largest rally held by Clinton totalling between 14,000 and 18,000 compared to 28,000 for Trump. Admittedly, Clinton did have a star-studded line-up of surrogates that included Joe Biden, Michelle and Barack Obama, who fanned out across the country to stump for her, while music stars like Bruce Springsteen and Lady Gaga played shows in her honour. But ultimately a candidate rises or falls based upon their own strengths and US voters did not feel they were voting for Obama’s legacy; they felt they were voting for Clinton herself.

What was probably more important was where the candidates chose to campaign, especially in the final weeks. Again, much of the media missed the logic behind Trump’s strategy. During this critical period Trump targeted the US ‘rustbelt’, comprised of the north-eastern states of Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. The economies of these states had once been home to America’s formidable industrial steel industry, but this had been devastated by economic change in recent decades. Trump realised that the memories, sometimes highly romanticised, held by the citizens of these states of a more affluent and hopeful past made them especially susceptible to Trump’s message that he would bring jobs back to the American working class and ‘Make America Great Again’ (this was not much different to the underlying appeal of the Brexit campaign’s slogan in the United Kingdom that they would help people ‘take back control’ from faceless elites in Brussels). Yet the rustbelt states were part of Clinton’s ‘blue firewall’ — a number of states that had voted for Democrats in four out of the last six elections and that were assumed to be firmly in the Democratic camp. Polls taken throughout the election supported this notion, showing Trump trailing Clinton in Michigan and Wisconsin by up to seven percentage points, a seemingly insurmountable lead. Beyond these states were a number of ‘battleground states’ where the polls were tighter, but Trump was also generally trailing. Trump needed to win, at a minimum, not only the battleground states but also one or two of Clinton’s ‘firewall’ states.

In the final weeks Trump made campaign stops in the Rustbelt states. The media seemed baffled by this move, casting it as a desperate and misguided play by Trump. They asserted that, in light of the polls, he would be better served to go after the battleground states. But this missed the point that there was always a higher probability that some of the battleground states would tilt towards Trump. So with time running short it was imperative that Trump take a gamble and try wrenching rustbelt states out of Clinton’s firewall, without which he could not win even if he won the battleground states. In other words, it was absolutely strategically the right move for Trump to target the rustbelt. The erroneous accusations that Trump’s campaign was misguided in its decision-making was characteristic of the Democrats’ approach time and time again throughout the election, and even Obama would go on to criticise Clinton’s campaign strategy after the election when he stated that good ideas don’t matter if people don’t hear them…We have to compete everywhere. We have to show up everywhere… I won Iowa not because the demographics dictated that I would win Iowa. It was because I spent 87 days going to every small town and fair and fish fry.

Persuasion power
The final key part of Trump’s strategy lay in his power of persuasion. For over a year now Scott Adams, creator of the syndicated Dilbert cartoon, but also a trained hypnotist who understands the power of persuasion, had been applying his expertise to the US election. He explained that Trump displayed potent skills, labelling him ‘the best persuader I have ever seen. On a scale from 1 to 10… Trump is a 15.’ According to Adams, our emotions underlie the vast majority of our decision-making, which we like to think is rational and based on facts. After witnessing Trump’s behaviour over a year ago, Adams predicted that Trump would win the election. Using what he called the ‘Master Persuasion Filter’, Scott meticulously catalogued the rhetorical ‘tit for tat’ of the campaign between Trump and his opponents, showing at each turn how what appeared to be absurd statements often had a logic behind them. Consider Trump’s labelling of his political opponents. Marco Rubio was dubbed ‘little Marco’; Jeb Bush became ‘low energy Jeb’; Ted Cruz got tarred with ‘lying Ted’ and, of course, Hillary Clinton got stuck with ‘crooked Hillary’. Like characters in a play, Trump cast his opponents as characters in the simplest of fashions. And boy did the labels not only stick but behind them lay a simplistic method that operated on our cognitive biases. For example, consider Jeb Bush, part of the Bush
The rest of us watching from afar want to understand the populist lie behind his approach to governing, lies a logic that has worked traditional approach to campaigning, and which will no doubt election. Applied in an era of popular angst and during an extraordinary view them through a traditional political lens that no longer opponents disregarded them as impulsive and likely to fail. They his time. In other words, during all these calculated steps, Trump's prudent for him to campaign elsewhere and that he was wasting made him unelectable; after every campaign stop in Clinton's sup- gave Trump free media coverage, his opponents asserted that it up, Trump's opponents loudly declared his campaign was marred by general incompetence; after every outrageous statement that made him unelectable; after every campaign stop in Clinton's sup- posed 'blue firewall', his opponents stated that it would have been true for 'crooked Hillary'. This lent itself perfectly to Trump's labelling strategy. By labelling Hillary as a 'crook' for months on end — a person who is dishonest or criminal — it primed us to see her this way at a time when an email controversy was dogging the Clinton campaign. Once the label was used, it created a 'confirmation bias trap', and thus even the admission by FBI Director James Comey that Clinton had not acted criminally could not change the perception amongst large parts of the voting public that Clinton was dishonest. No other candidate in the election, besides Trump, had such an excellent grasp of these tactics.

**Trump's audacity**

Was there strategy behind Trump's ascent or was it dumb luck? Let us consider the following: after every Trump campaign shake-up, Trump's opponents loudly declared his campaign was marred by general incompetence; after every outrageous statement that gave Trump free media coverage, his opponents asserted that it made him unelectable; after every campaign stop in Clinton's supposed 'blue firewall', his opponents stated that it would have been prudent for him to campaign elsewhere and that he was wasting his time. In other words, during all these calculated steps, Trump's opponents disregarded them as impulsive and likely to fail. They viewed them through a traditional political lens that no longer applied in an era of popular angst and during an extraordinary election.

Behind the baffling swings in Trump's behaviour and non-traditional approach to campaigning, and which will no doubt lie behind his approach to governing, lies a logic that has worked well for him so far. That is the audacity of Trump. If the Democrats hope to take back the White House in four years' time, and the rest of us watching from afar want to understand the populist phenomenon which could conceivably come to our own shores in time (especially if New Zealand is shaken by economic turbulence in the near future), it is imperative that we understand that there is a logical thread that runs through Trump's seemingly irrational behaviour. In other words, even if it appears that Trump is a buffoon who was lucky enough to somehow rise to become the most powerful human on the planet, our best bet is to try to see beyond Trump's outlandish comments to the stratagem of a man of considerable cunning.

**NOTES**

7. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
On the morning of 9 November, the cry went up that women had failed each other, as well as Hillary Clinton. Even the scandal of the Access Hollywood tape failed to deter millions of women, who, although appalled by it, cast their votes in line with their husbands.1 A staggering 53 per cent of white women had voted for Trump, as did an unexpected number of liberal Hispanic women and non-university educated and rural women, who feared downward mobility. And 2 per cent less black women voted for Clinton than had supported Obama in 2012. Such was the momentum for change, at any price, that there was no gender unity. Are these women ‘the enemy within… women letting down other women’, asked Yasmin Alibhai-Brown?2 Ardent feminist Sheila Rowbotham, writing in 1972, had suggested that women who aspired to lead would be isolated by their critics: ‘it is only when women begin to organize in large numbers that they become a political force’.3 Yet, Hillary Clinton did have the support of large numbers — it is the fifth time that the winner of the popular vote has lost the election (famously Al Gore over Bush in 2000). Nonetheless, some argue, the gender focus in Clinton’s campaign created a message vacuum — a ‘poverty of ideas’. Being a woman and uniquely well qualified for the job was not, in itself, sufficient. Clinton, as Anthony Beevor suggests, took it as read that ‘she could count on the support of an army of women, blacks, Hispanics and students’.4 But instead, writes Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, this army rebelled, and voted for a leader who had demonised them.

Trump and his populist acolytes, unashamedly propagating fake news, had successfully cut Clinton off from the support of women, and men, who, it had been assumed, were her natural supporters. She was torn apart ‘for how she looked, talked or even laughed’.5 Clinton had been under sustained attack from the Right since her husband was elected governor of Arkansas in 1978.6 The treatment meted out to Clinton has many precedents in history. Take, for example, the case of Anne Hutchinson, in the mid-17th century Massachusetts Bay colony. Hutchinson’s detractors, both men and women, successfully humiliated and negated her. Finally she confessed to heresy and was banished from the colony.

Addressing the Democratic Convention, Michelle Obama attempted to rescue Clinton from the calumnies created to eliminate her. She pinpointed her 30 years’ experience, her advocacy of health care and children’s and women’s rights, and the steadiness she had shown as secretary of state that would equip her, as president, to deal with the heavy responsibility of the nuclear trigger. But this stout defence was dismissed out of hand by Trump and his apparatchiks. Clinton’s past was just that, the past. She offered nothing new, only more of the same. Trump, however, was the future, a ‘saviour to the people… who were suffering the trauma of industrial decline’.7

Close alignment
Axiomatically the culprit was the very liberal coalition or ‘establishment’, with which Clinton could not have been more closely aligned if she had tried.8 Much, of course, was made of her Goldman Sachs paid speeches, and the possible conflict of interest between her State Department work and the Clinton Foundation. Even Bernie Sanders had portrayed Clinton as the establishment candidate, and the assertion stuck.

The term ‘establishment’ had reputedly been adduced to explain the ‘matrix of official and social relations within which power is exercised’ that had protected the British spies Burgess, Maclean, Philby and, for longer, Blunt.9 However grossly unfair, Clinton was made out to be the (establishment) insider who had betrayed the American people, depriving them of the supposed benefits of the global economy. ‘We underestimated how angry white men are’, Charlotte Church told the New Statesman.10

Currently a Bodleian Blackwell fellow in Oxford, Rita Ricketts is working on a New Zealand history, which will consider the influence of those in the second tier of policy-making. She was one of the first women to be a member of the NZIIA’s Standing Committee, and the first academic to be seconded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Hillary Clinton’s unsuccessful bid to become president of America is an epic that perhaps even Hollywood could not have dreamed up. Early in the morning of 9 November, her supporters wept in horror as reality struck, just as fervent British Remain supporters, around the world, wept last June. How Clinton had managed to lose an election to a candidate as divisive and, hitherto, unpopular as Donald Trump is providing unending copy for the media and baffling observers. For a woman to follow a black president was seemingly a bridge too far in the prevailing culture of myth, misogyny and mendacity.
Yet a backlash had been on the cards for decades. After the Second World War returning servicemen were no longer prepared to be servile and deferential. In the United Kingdom a Labour government becalmed them with a social welfare system, which would care for them ‘from the cradle to the grave’. In America, economic success seemed to promise a larger share of the pie for everyone. Nonetheless, C. Wright Mills, writing in the 1950s, warned of the danger of a prevailing and controlling elite — a military industrial complex — which was dominating every sector of the economy at the expense of the masses.

The Swinging Sixties coincided with a period of violent rebellion in America, and in Europe the May 1968 uprising brought Paris to a standstill; similar protests against the ‘establishment’ took place in London and other capitals. The Watts riots, in America, running over five days, leaving 34 dead, more than 1000 injured, 4000 arrested and property worth millions destroyed, although sparked by racism — the arrest of an African American — were also about poverty, poor housing and lack of educational and employment opportunity. They presaged the Long Hot Summer of 1967, on the streets and on campus — Columbia University for instance.

Mass alienation
Political scientists such as Thomas Dye and Haron Zeigler re-emphasised the danger of ignoring mass alienation.10 John Kenneth Galbraith, writing in 1993, identified the offenders as the ‘contented’ people who appeared oblivious to the deprivation around them.11 Writing in 2006, Barack Obama too, echoing Ronald Reagan, warned that the liberal welfare state has grown complacent and overly bureaucratic…. [its] purpose is not to persuade the other side but to keep their bases assured of the rightness of their… cause…. Most people who serve in Washington have been trained as either lawyers or political operatives — professions that tend to place a premium on winning arguments rather than solving problems.12

The crunch came with the crash of 2007–08. The plight of ‘ordinary’ people, many of whom lost their homes while bankers kept their bonuses, was palpable.13 It left the way open, as Dye and Zeigler had predicted, for a demagogue, or counter elite, to exploit the resentment of the poorer classes. Presidential candidate Trump seized the chance. His rhetoric was simple and direct, unlike Clinton’s, which appeared too dense and too reliant on her own ‘expert’ opinion. Jobs were at risk because of immigration, de-skilling, globalisation, trade deals, climate change legislation and so on; lives were in jeopardy because of terrorism and America’s failure to stand up to it. It sounded all too familiar to those who followed the fake news put out during the United Kingdom’s Brexit referendum campaign.

Entirely false claims, wrapped up in emotionally appealing narratives and constantly magnified in online echo chambers, seem to have acquired the power to sway a significant part of the electorate. Warm narrative prevailed over cold fact, feeling over reason.15 Even the British Daily Telegraph, not known for its radicalism, declared that ‘Trump’s bravado plays to the mob and undermines the institutions of democracy’. If Trump said the election was rigged, that Clinton was a liar and a crook, then the people believed him. Even when disproved, he managed to convey the impression that she just did not feel trustworthy, that she had something to hide — though she did not. Even Clinton’s family-friendly policies were portrayed as counting for more than the jobs of such concern to working-class male voters.

Clinton was also to take the rap for President Obama’s alleged failures, although it was a Republican Congress that had so repeatedly stymied his attempts to create jobs (their opposition to his plans for infrastructure development, for example), to deal with wage stagnation and consequent widening social inequality. Obama’s co-called (environmental) ‘war on coal’ made stalwart Republicans of deprived workers in West Virginia, where unemployment is at 6 per cent. Overall, some 6 million fewer voters turned out in 2016 than in 2012, with around two-thirds of the no-shows being Democrats; millions of other Democrats voted in the down-ballot. In Michigan, where Clinton lost by around 13,000 votes, some analysts, the journalist Jonathan Alter, for example, estimated that 90,000 Democrats left the top line blank.

Essential question
If Obama was seen as too weak to create jobs, to raise income levels, to protect the United States from terrorism, to deal with the unrest in his own heartland Chicago and too concerned with what was happening in Washington to notice, would Clinton be any better? In his inaugural address, punched out staccato-style, President Trump outlined nationalistic policies that would deliver the jobs blue-collar workers needed. (Within days he was to make a down payment on these promises: the wall between Mexico and the United States and the closing of borders to Syrian refugees, for instance.) For many observers, and not just women, his speech, as predictable as it was, heralded the death of ‘dreams, struggles and aspirations’; some went as far as portraying it as the new McCarthyism. Were civil rights, social justice, economic equity and fairness to be vanquished by Trump and his team of reactionaries?16

The next day, as President Trump’s speech flashed around the world, women (and men) poured onto the streets of Washington — and the world’s capitals — to reclaim lost ground; more people went on the march in Washington than attended the inauguration. They railed against a president, a self-confessed alpha male, who was threatening to remove their hard-won rights. But in future they will also have to address the sexism that has successfully crossed over from gender to ethnicity. As Jonathan Alter observed: ‘many Latino men had responded favourably to Trump’s machismo’, despite his slurs against Mexicans and immigrants. Clinton had scored at least 5 percentage points worse among Latinos than Obama in 2012. Nothing, it seemed could stem the appeal of Trump’s misogyny. Men, and clearly women too, were not yet ready for a woman president.

The radical 19th century novelist Mrs Humphrey Ward argued that the emancipation of women had then reached its limits — limits fixed by their physical constitution. Trump almost certainly has not read Ward, but he used this idea to further undermine Clinton’s candidacy when she was diagnosed with pneumonia. Using this spurious evidence, he jumped to the idea that a woman would be too weak to stand up to foreign leaders and military men such as President Putin.17 There were more ‘authoritarian big men’ that women leaders are having to deal with: Xi Jinping, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey), Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (Egypt), Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines) and Narendra Modi (India) for example; on her recent visit to Turkey, Prime Minister Theresa May appeared to lack the temerity to oppose Erdoğan’s repressive regime. Trump was worried that Clinton, in particular, would be too cautious in her dealings with China, over China’s
territorial rights in the South China Sea, for example, or take a stand against Israeli occupation of Palestine.

**Game changer**

Clinton’s record had positioned her as a game changer. Women’s and children’s rights were, for her, a fundamental part of foreign policy; some may recall her address in Beijing in 1995 when she asserted that ‘human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights’. Would she go soft and give higher priority to social and humanitarian programmes at the expense of the military or overseas bases? Almost a century before, Mahatma Gandhi questioned Hindu practices that limited the involvement of women. He saw women’s moral power as superior to men’s. Angela Merkel’s moral stance on refugees is seen, as a leading member of the Greens explained, as ‘empathetic: taking action to address a humanitarian problem staring Europe in the face’. But her policy is under intense fire, threatening her chances of retaining the chancellorship.

Judging by her performance so far, it seems that the British prime minister’s foreign policy-making is neither soft nor moral. Is her desperation to clinch trade deals overriding humanitarian issues? Asked about President Trump’s ban of refugees, Theresa May said it was up to America; other leaders, such as Justin Trudeau, were quick to condemn the policy. A bullish May is said to have wrung a strong commitment to NATO from Trump and she is as determined as he is to retreat from multilateralism; she could hardly do anything else given Brexit. Judging by the president’s body language as he and the prime minister faced the press corps, it seemed that she had charmed him and blunted his rough edges; or was he just being avuncular? He was full of smiles and bursting with enthusiasm for the ‘special relationship’. Yet for how long will this very cordial entente hold?

Political observers have already questioned May’s ability to stand up to Trump, so much so that she issued a public denial. She told the BBC’s Andrew Marr and MPs in Parliament that a woman who is unafraid to let him know that his language and attitudes towards women are unacceptable would be a challenge for Trump. She also repudiated the use of torture, and the intelligence gleaned from it. There are marked differences in the two leaders’ attitudes to President Putin’s policies in Syria, but Boris Johnson is already brokering an accommodation.

Will securing a trade deal with America be the push-over May has been led to believe? There is a danger that Trump may not find the United Kingdom as useful as it was. Stranded between the United States and Europe, it is no longer the bridge that was the bulwark of Kennedy’s European policy — the ‘Trojan horse’ that had so irked De Gaulle in 1963. Britain’s relationship with both America and the European Union ‘could now be in tatters’, argues Tom Raines of Chatham House.

**Reliability doubts**

May’s championship of the liberal establishment, evident in a speech she made late last year to the British financial establishment gathered in London’s Guildhall, may also cause Trump to question her reliability. If it turns that she is not the fellow traveler she appeared to be at their first meeting, might not this serve to confirm his suspicion that top jobs are not ‘safe in the hands of a woman? He would not be alone in his thinking. The United Nations’ rejection of New Zealand’s former Prime Minister Helen Clark, one of four women candidates, for the post of secretary-general suggests that the international community still lacks faith in women. There were strident calls in the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand for a woman to be awarded the UN job. An ‘Equity Now’ online campaign, calling for a woman to be appointed, attracted more than 30,000 supporters.

As the first woman to lead the United Nations Development Programme, Clark was tipped as the candidate that would provide strong leadership, with Syria high on the list. But the post-truth syndrome hit her. Would she be acceptable to Western powers, given that she had refused to send troops to Iraq in 2003? Had this, along with the New Zealand Labour Party’s earlier historic victory on the issue of visits by US warships to New Zealand waters, made the American military establishment nervous? While the American delegation opposed her candidacy outright, the British were thought to have given her passive support. But with an unabated refugee crisis in Europe, the Security Council opted for a European.

Reform of the United Nations’ rather Byzantine selection process, which had smacked of a papal conclave, was introduced, in 2016, to make it more transparent. Each candidate was able to submit and publicly defend his or her blueprint for the position. This should have worked in Clark’s favour; she had seen off many male challengers. In the end, none of the female candidates succeeded — a poor showing given the United Nations’ commitment to achieving gender equality.

If the United Nations was unable to bring itself to accept a highly qualified woman at its helm, then America’s rejection of Hillary Clinton is not at all surprising. Could any women sometime soon break this impasse? There are those who are pinning their hopes on a presidential bid by Michelle Obama. Isha Sesay (a British born journalist of Sierra Leonean descent and founder of W.E Can Lead), writing in the *Observer*, does not want her to stand.

I think she’ll be far more effective outside the machinery of government. Look at what Hillary Clinton went through and the double standards that were forced upon her. Now imagine what would happen to a black woman — the intersection of gender and race is just a whole other ballgame.

**Breakthrough appointment**

The appointment of Baroness Patricia Scotland (a dual citizen of the United Kingdom and Dominica, and, in 1991, the first black woman in the United Kingdom to be appointed a Queen’s counsel), as the first female Commonwealth secretary-general, was hailed as a breakthrough. Not, you may say, a post that is on a par with the American presidency, but 33 per cent of the world’s population resides in countries that are members of the Commonwealth and the secretary-general is second only to the Queen in its hierarchy. Baroness Scotland took off on a moral offensive, pledging to prioritise gender equality and the combatting of domestic violence and climate change, especially as it affected the very vulnerable people in small islands states. Not surprisingly the plaudits soon fell away, and accusations flowed: corruption, bribery, poor performance, spendaholism were among those lobbed at her.

Other black women, too, have been trailblazers. The standouts include Dr Diamini-Zuma, the first female head of the African Union, who could yet be the next president of South Africa, past president of Malawi Dr Joyce Banda and Liberia’s current president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. In 2011 Sirleaf was awarded the...
Fillon is perhaps just a more acceptable face of Le Pen. Those who be hard-pressed and to outdo Marine Le Pen. Her rival François do with triggering of two great wars in the past century — will the fermentation of ‘the wine of nationality’, which had much to spots — to preventing what Arnold Toynbee once described as the people of the United States to join smaller democracies in ending marginalisation of women’. Germaine Greer argues that equality is not what women want — they do not want the zero-sum corporate men’s world? The Maori Queen Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu, who before her death reigned for 40 years and was the first woman to lead the Kingitanga, was celebrated for her wisdom and gentleness. But she, like the English Queen, had influence but little real power at state level. Most of the women who have succeeded in gaining real political power have been those cast in the traditional, male, mould, backed up by centre-right and/or right wing parties. Margaret Thatcher was acceptable in conservative circles because she was a corporate man — the bellicose war-leader in the Falklands War — who had, Camille Paglia asserts, ‘manipulated the same screens as her male counterparts’. If Hillary Clinton had been a Republican, a more conventional version of Sarah Palin, she might have won. She would not have been a threat, and would have been acceptable because she was a male replica. In the forthcoming French election, the extreme right-wing candidate, Marine Le Pen, is running a very muscular campaign, reminiscent of her father’s, although toned down a peg or two. In his BBC show, Andrew Marr portrayed her as riding on the crest of the populist global wave, sparked by Trump and Brexit; she has already paid homage at Trump’s tower in the week before the inauguration, although she did not meet the president-elect in person. Her appeal to renascent nationalists could outstrip that of President Trump and his tub-thumping populists.

Nationalist appeal

This appeal to nationalism is characterising election campaigns in Germany and Holland, too. Those committed to European unity, and to humanitarian, non-nationalistic solutions in the world’s hot spots — to preventing what Arnold Toynbee once described as the fermentation of ‘the wine of nationality’, which had much to do with triggering of two great wars in the past century — will be hard-pressed and to outdo Marine Le Pen. Her rival François Fillon is perhaps just a more acceptable face of Le Pen. Those who run against them will have to wage a strong campaign in the grass roots: more in the style (but not substance) of Trump than Clinton.

Marine Le Pen is free to do her worst, but women who have made a stand against oppression have been incarcerated and murdered. Aung San Suu Kui and Yulia Tymoshenko were imprisoned, while Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto and most recently Jo Cox (during the United Kingdom’s referendum campaign) were murdered. Clinton, however, is alive to tell her story. As Michelle Obama has suggested, it will help the younger generation of women ‘to take for granted that a woman can be president of the United States’. Clinton, whatever her critics say, has provided a role model, demonstrating many of the qualities needed in a head of state, Michelle Obama asserted. She was not a ‘quitter’, she remained calm and unruffled even when under sustained attack, she was magnanimous in conceding defeat and she was a dignified observer at the inauguration of her rival.

For a woman to follow a black president was seemingly a bridge too far, given the prevailing culture of myth, misogyny and mendacity. Clinton, however, did win the popular vote (Trump the majority of electoral votes). Great American leaders have not been always winners — Eleanor Roosevelt, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, for example. Others, like Rosa Parks, were seldom seen above the parapet. And there are many more, like Anne Hutchinson, who, to their cost, challenged the gender and racist status quo in America. Is it too audacious to hope that now he is president, Trump will take account of their struggles and achievements? Whether or not he does, his presidency may be just the catalyst that is needed to restart the stalled campaign for a woman in the White House.

NOTES

14. See, eg, Melvyn King’s The End of Alchemy (London, 2016) and the philosopher John Gray’s talk for BBC Radio 4, 26 Nov 2016.
Looking for opportunities with President Trump

Wayne Mapp considers the way forward for New Zealand as old certainties are wiped away.

The election of President Trump has been the most unsettling experience that New Zealand has had with the United States for many years. Many old certainties were wiped away. Among the most important was being able to count on the United States as a leader in liberal trade policies, which has been a hallmark of United States policy since the end of the Second World War. This has been turned on its head.

Instead, as President Trump’s inauguration speech forecast, it will be all America first. Apparently not in the sense of American leadership, but rather that the United States has to be the obvious winner of any deals. Hopefully that does not exclude the other parties to such deals also being winners. Because if other nations do not see that they also win, there will be no incentive to do deals with the United States.

The dramatic change in tone of the new administration means it is very easy to focus on the challenges that it will pose. That is not surprising. Given what has already been announced, these challenges will be very significant. They will span a wide range of areas and many of the administration’s decisions will be quite different from what New Zealand would expect from a liberal democracy. But these issues should not blind New Zealand to the opportunities.

For both Australia and New Zealand, President Trump’s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership is a major setback. This decision alone completely unsettles the situation in the Asia–Pacific region. The decision potentially extends well beyond trade. What will be the implications for security policy?

The key partners of the United States in the Asia–Pacific region, Australia, Japan and South Korea, will be wondering if they are going to have to be more self-reliant in protecting their own security. In doing so, they may wish to reduce their risks by improving their relationships with potential adversaries, in particular China. And for South Korea, looking at the ways to reduce tensions with North Korea may become an imperative. Part of that will include an enhanced relationship with China.

Rising China

If there are improved relationships with China, that is likely to improve China’s overall position in the Asia–Pacific region. This could well be at the expense of the United States.

It is tempting to think of this change as a binary equation, that as China rises, the position of the United States will diminish. That if the TPP is dead, then the solution lies in other trade arrangements within the Asia–Pacific region. There will undoubtedly be efforts in this regard. They may well succeed. Perhaps the TPP will proceed, but without the United States. This seems to be the intent of Australia and Japan. The inevitable effect will be a reduction of United States influence in the Asia–Pacific region. Power given up may not be so easily recovered, particularly if there are other states willing to take advantage of the opportunity. This will put pressure on the United States. It may need to find a way

The Trump administration will pose many challenges for New Zealand, not the least being the abandonment of United States leadership of free trade liberalism. However, given the importance of the United States, New Zealand will also need to look for the opportunities that the new administration will present. One such opportunity may present itself as a result of Brexit. Britain will be seeking free trade agreements with its partners. New Zealand is already first in line. President Trump also wants a free trade deal with Britain. A free trade agreement of the ‘Five Eyes’ nations becomes a real possibility. This is a strategic opportunity that New Zealand must pursue.
to get back into the TPP, albeit on modified terms. All indications are that this will not be an immediate priority for the new administration.

But the relationship with the United States extends well beyond Asia-Pacific affairs. Even for Asia-Pacific nations there are many other dimensions to their overall United States relationship. It would be foolish for the partners of the United States to simply park any new initiatives for the next four years.

**New possibilities**

Although the Trump administration will pose many difficulties, it, nevertheless, is prudent for New Zealand to also look for the opportunities that the Trump administration offers. This means focusing on what President Trump might like to do, as opposed to trying to persuade him to do things that go against his grain. For the time being the TPP is dead, so far as it applies to the United States. Arguing for the TPP will not change Trump’s mind, at least in the short term. After all, he won the election in part because he opposed the TPP.

So any new opportunities will need to have an obvious appeal to President Trump, equivalent to playing to his vanity. A possible answer lies in Britain’s determination, set out by Prime Minister Theresa May in her speech at Lancaster House, to go for a hard Brexit. When Britain leaves the European Union, Britain will not be part of the EU customs union, the European Court will not have jurisdiction, there will be no budget payments to the European Union, there will be no automatic right of free entry for EU residents and Britain will be freed from much of the plethora of petty EU regulation. Britain will be in the same position vis-à-vis the European Union as it was prior to 1973 when it joined the Common Market.

As a result Britain will seek a free trade agreement with the European Union. In principle this will be quite a straightforward negotiation. If the negotiations do not succeed, then WTO rules will apply. Although Britain has its membership of the WTO through the European Union, if any EU member makes it difficult for the United Kingdom to change to direct membership of the WTO they will find themselves the target of direct British trade retaliation.

**Brexit opportunity**

The key point of the hard Brexit is that Britain now needs to have free trade agreements with as many of its key trade partners as possible. In the week of Theresa May’s speech, Prime Minister Bill English was in Britain. It was agreed by the two prime ministers that New Zealand would be first in the queue for a free trade agreement. Therein lies the opportunity.

Prior to his inauguration President Trump made it clear that he wants a free trade agreement with Britain. This was a very different stance to that of President Obama, who showed no enthusiasm for a free trade agreement with Britain. The difference reflects the fact that Trump considers the European Union to be a failing organisation. Perhaps more importantly, his commitment to concluding a free trade deal with Britain acknowledges his support for Brexit. It reflects his desire to reward the Brexit supporters, many of whom were vocal in their support of Trump during the presidential campaign. May’s direct style will enable her to build an effective working relationship with Trump.

Australia is in a similar position to New Zealand; it wants a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom as well. Canada has just done a free trade deal with the European Union; it will now need to do the same with Britain. In addition, President Trump wants to re-negotiate NAFTA. This seems to be aimed at Mexico far more than it is aimed at Canada.

So all ‘Five Eyes’ nations are looking to do free trade deals with Britain. Australia already has a free trade deal with the United States, as of course does Canada through NAFTA. The stated preference of the Trump administration is to do bilateral trade deals. This reflects President Trump’s basic distrust of multilateralism, which is perceived to generally weaken the status of the United States within such arrangements. They are also seen as weakening the United States negotiating position in that the United States will have to agree to more concessions with a number of nations than it would ever have to do with a single nation.

**Possible agreement**

These concerns will not be so large when considering a multilateral trade deal that links the ‘Five Eyes’ nations. It can be argued that the United States will not feel quite so compelled to be the obvious winner in such an agreement, since there is a greater synergy in the cultural and economic outlook of the five nations. It will be easier for the administration to make the argument that it is in the strategic interests of the United States that all five nations should be transparently seen to make gains in the economic sphere, as well as reinforcing the security links between the five nations.
There is a pragmatic and strategic basis for a multilateral free trade deal among all five nations. Such a deal does not require that each nation endorse all the policies of each of the members. To do so would put an impossibly high bar to the completion of free trade agreements. In any event, such a free trade deal will last long after any particular administration.

Free trade deals are primarily about the pragmatic opportunities for economic growth. If it was otherwise New Zealand would not have a free trade deal with China. New Zealand readily accepted that China was not a democracy, and that it did not have a fully independent legal system. It was sufficient that China complied with a minimum level of human rights norms and broadly respected international law.

A free trade agreement involving the five nations could appeal to many of those who opposed the TPP. It would not need investor dispute provisions; any such disputes can be sorted through the domestic courts, though there would need to be a multilateral trade court to deal with tariff and related issues.

The five nations have strong cultural, linguistic and economic affinities. All of them have a more liberal economic framework than any of the EU nations. This will make negotiations on the trade in industrial goods and services relatively straightforward.

**Agricultural issues**

The agricultural issues will be more difficult. Canada is particularly vulnerable, with large sectors of agriculture having very high levels of protection. British farmers have had the benefit of EU protectionist policies for more than 40 years. It will be quite a wrench as they are progressively opened up to competition, particularly from New Zealand dairy farmers. United States farmers, particularly dairy farmers, have also had substantial protection for many years. Thus the Australia–United States free trade agreement made few inroads upon United States agricultural protectionism.

A free trade agreement will need to include agriculture, and it will need to be at least as advantageous as the TPP was in this regard.

There are some new initiatives that could be included in a free trade agreement that encompasses nations that have such similar cultural origins and broadly similar living standards. It should be possible to include provisions that will greatly improve the movement of people on work visas between the five nations.

Who would win from a free trade agreement between the five nations?

For Prime Minister May, this would be a great coup. A core element of her Brexit message is that Britain will once again become a global nation with far reaching trade agreements. May will be able to sell to the British people that she has delivered a free trade deal that encompasses as many people as in Europe. It will be proof that Brexit was worth it.

For President Trump such a deal would show he can do strategic deals that work for America. It would intimately link a core set of security arrangements with broader trade objectives. In doing so Trump will be able to argue that American security and prestige is enhanced. In particular such a deal would include two nations that sit within the South Pacific. Thus it would retain and enhance the role of the United States within the Pacific.

**Core security**

For Australia and New Zealand, such an agreement strengthens their core security relationship with the United States. Importantly, it enables both countries to offset their dependence on the Chinese market. This will serve the interests of Australia and New Zealand as well as those of the United States.

An agreement covering these five nations can become the core of a broader set of agreements. There are a number of developed nations, such as Chile, Japan and Singapore, which could readily become part of a free trade framework that has its origins in the networking of trade and security relationships.

The time to achieve a free trade agreement between the five nations is now. The negotiations for such an agreement encompassing the five nations will need to take place simultaneously with Britain’s exit negotiations from the European Union. The intent would be that a new agreement kicks in on the same day that Britain withdraws from the European Union.

The election of President Trump will unsettle the existing order. But we have it within our power to take the initiative to shape the new order to our advantage.
Shinzo Abe pushes hard on a regional agenda

Stuart McMillan reviews the recent Abe–Putin meeting and its aftermath.

After China overtook Japan as the second largest economy in the world, it became too easy to underestimate the importance of Japan. This tendency was made stronger by the attention paid to China’s growth rates, its military build-up and aggression and territorial claims in the South China Sea. Yet Japan is a powerful regional power and recent talks between Shinzo Abe, prime minister of Japan, and the leaders of Russia, the Philippines, Australia, Indonesia and Vietnam all have the potential to be significant for the whole Asia–Pacific region, New Zealand included.

The talks with Russia were the most difficult and the outcome least certain. Even before Vladimir Putin, president of Russia, arrived in Japan for a visit on 15 and 16 December, it had become clear that Abe’s hopes for the meeting — the return of islands Japan calls the Northern Territories and the signing of a peace treaty formally bringing the Second World War to an end between the two countries — had no hope of being fulfilled.

The islands were taken by the Soviet Union in the last few days of the Second World War. Under the San Francisco Treaty of 1951 Japan was forced to cede the Kuril Islands. Japan has long maintained, however, that the four islands in the chain closest to Japan’s northern island of Hokkaido, Kunashira, Otorfu, Habomai and Shikotan, were not included in that arrangement. Some 17,000 Japanese citizens fled these islands. The Soviet Union and then Russia have maintained sovereignty over all four islands since that time. Japan has refused to sign a peace treaty until the islands belong to Japan again. A compromise was proposed in 1956 under which two of the islands, Habomai and Shikotan, would be returned to Japan and a peace treaty signed but nothing came of it.

Adverse signals

The signs that little would be settled during President Putin’s visit to Japan abounded. Before he left Russia he denied that Russia had a territorial dispute with Japan, though he conceded that Japan thought it did. He said that the focus of the talks should be on economic deals. He had declined the offer of a male Akita dog as a mate for the dog which had been an earlier gift from Japan. He turned up more than two hours late for his meeting with Abe. Russia had also announced that it was placing anti-ship missiles on two of the disputed islands, Kunashira and Otorfu. Putin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, had said that Russia had a sovereign right to place missiles on the islands and he hoped (his degree of optimism remained unclear) that would not spoil the atmosphere for the talks. Moscow had itself been provoked by an argument from Shotaro Yachi, head of Japan’s National Security Secretariat, who raised the possibility that US bases might be put on the islands when they were returned to Japan. For Abe’s part he had shown great hospitality by inviting Putin to Abe’s home province of Yamaguchi and suggesting a bath together in the hot pools, a suggestion Putin declined.

Resolving the issues between the two countries was always going to be hard. Among the most difficult were:

- Russia considers the Sea of Okhotsk a prime defence area. The Kamchatka Peninsula is home to part of its Pacific fleet of surface ships and submarines. For a while Russia used to claim that it needed those islands claimed by Japan to have ice-free access, though Geoffrey Jukes, a former international relations scholar at the Australian National University, found a Russian map showing that major passages were ice-free. The Kuril Islands, including those claimed by Japan, form part of the encirclement of the Sea of Okhotsk.
- Japan is bound to the United States, which Russia regards as a rival or even an enemy, by the 1952 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation between the United States and Japan. While Japan pursues some of its own interests in East Asia, it is identified with US interests in the region. In 2013 according to Japanese government sources, Putin told Abe: ‘I know about the special alliance between Japan and the United States. Regardless of what judgment you may make, it will have no effect on the
Japan–Russia relationship.' Whether Putin and his advisers misinterpreted that statement is an open question. When the suggestion came up that the US–Japan treaty might involve the placing of US installations on the Northern Territories, which are close to Russia's coast, then the treaty and the whole treaty relationship took on a great significance for Russia. Japan's position is that it relies on the United States for defence and could not deny the United States access to the islands if it asked to station weapons or troops there.

- There would always be wording problems. If Russia agreed to the 'return' of two or more of the islands, that might be seen as an admission that Russia should not have seized them in the first place. If Russia made a 'gift' of the islands, that would not be acceptable in Japan, which believes that the islands have always belonged to Japan and are not Russia's to give. Whether the combined efforts of Russian and Japanese international lawyers could come up with a formula acceptable to both countries is an intriguing point, but there is no disposition at the moment to make that search.

- The territorial claims are linked to domestic politics in both countries. Putin has built a reputation as a fierce defender of Russian territory. He has lamented the loss of territory in the collapse of the Soviet Union, so conceding any territory might risk undermining his standing. For Japan the return of its Northern Territories has a huge symbolic significance and Japan has not forgotten the 17,000 Japanese who fled from the islands when the Russians took them over. A noticeboard on a beach in the north of Hokkaido, from where one of the islands can be seen, sets out Japan's claim. People of strong nationalist leanings in both Russia and Japan are unlikely to let their respective governments forget their territorial claims. The United States had not wanted Abe to host Putin at all, largely to maintain the sanctions against Russia imposed after Russia annexed Crimea. Abe is the only G7 leader to have maintained major contact with Putin. The subject of the Crimea annexation did not come up in the talks between the two.

Seventy agreements

Despite no progress being made on the islands issue, the meeting between Putin and Abe concluded nearly 70 economic agreements. An agreement was reached enabling some of those who left the Northern Territories when Russia took them to revisit their homeland. There are 6000 of them left. They have an average age of 80.7 years. A few of the economic agreements are substantial, but it remains to be seen how far they are implemented. Japanese investors are somewhat wary of spending their money in Russia. Even the development of the disputed islands, which was among the agreements, may not work out. Russia is insisting that Japanese firms that invest in the islands must pay tax to Russia—a practice which would be seen as acknowledging Russian sovereignty there. Putin has invited Abe to Russia for another meeting.

Both Abe and Putin could point to some gains out of the meeting. Putin secured some substantial economic agreements. These are important to him because Russia is facing sanctions, a drop in oil prices and major problems, particularly with Western Europe. But the gains have to be tempered by uncertainty about some of the economic agreements and there will be no immediate lifting of the sanctions led by Japan (what Donald Trump will do as president is another story). Despite bucking the wish of the United States that Abe should not meet Putin, Japan remains as committed to its alliance with the United States as it ever was. Putin would have been happy indeed to have seen some loosening of those ties.

Abe’s gains included an invitation to Russia, which at least upheld the principle of continuing dialogue. He could also say he conducted a civilised meeting with Putin. He concluded economic agreements which might be profitable for Japan and might ease relations with Russia. But he did not get any of the islands back. He probably lost some credibility with Japan’s ultra-nationalists and he has done nothing to win greater public and political support for the revision of the pacifist clause in the Japan’s Constitution—a project on which he has set his heart.

Abe’s wider regional agenda was to strengthen Japan’s position, particularly in South-east Asia, and to ensure continued US involvement in and commitment to the region. Securing better relations with Japan’s neighbour, Russia, would be a prudent strategic move for that intention. Whether the December meeting will have that outcome will take time to show.

Little delay

Abe lost little time in pursuing this regional agenda. In January he visited the Philippines, Australia, Indonesia and Vietnam. In Australia a new defence agreement between the two countries was concluded. The Philippines visit was one of the most interesting. The country, once a US colony, had long been regarded as solidly in the US camp. However, after its president, Rodrigo Duterte, striving to control a rampant drug trade, sanctioned probably thousands of extrajudicial killings and boasted of having carried out some himself, a number of governments became alienated. When the US government, then led by Barack Obama, expressed concern, Duterte called Obama ‘son of a whore’. During a visit to Beijing, Duterte spoke of separation from the United States and a pivot towards China. Although the Philippines obtained a ruling against China in a United Nations tribunal over China’s extensive South China Sea claims, Duterte appeared to ignore this finding when the Philippines received some extensive aid and investment from China. Early in January two vessels from Russia’s Pacific fleet docked in Manila, the first such visit in four years. Neither China nor Russia seem fazed by the wholesale killings. Abe did not discuss the war on drugs, though he rather deftly offered some financial help for addicts. He also pledged nearly US$9 billion for development projects in the Philippines.

The January visit by Abe built on earlier visits over the last few years. The Philippines appears to be at the centre of a bidding war between China and Japan, both of which have given huge amounts of aid and investment. Despite Duterte’s proclamations, the Philippines has not formally renounced the 1951 mutual defence treaty
between it and the United States. Abe would like to keep it that way.

In Indonesia and Vietnam Abe pledged money for infrastructure investments and gave Vietnam a number of patrol vessels to help maritime safety efforts.

Summed up, Abe’s visits to the three South-east Asian countries were to counter Chinese influence, including by grants, loans and investments; to argue for the rule of law; to counter Chinese South China Sea expansion; to try to impart a sense of stability in the face of uncertainties brought about by the impending Trump presidency; and, possibly, as a Reuters article suggested, to draw Trump’s attention to Asia.

Critical interests
Critical Japanese interests are at stake. Japan relies on the protection of the United States and is under its nuclear umbrella. Donald Trump has raised questions about continued US protection of some allies. He has suggested that perhaps Japan and South Korea should acquire nuclear weapons. Japan is host to about 50,000 US military servicemen, another 5000 or so civilians associated with the military and 40,000 dependants of the military and civilians. Trump has suggested that host countries pay more for the stationing of US military.

Japan has two handicaps as a regional player. The first is the reputation it earned as an invader and occupier of parts of China, the Korean Peninsula and parts of South-east Asia during the Second World War and the years before it. The second is that some of its policies tend to be seen as being too closely identified with those of the United States. In China and North and South Korea, feelings still run high after the Japanese occupation. In South-east Asia there are still memories, but Japan has been a generous aid donor and investor and sought co-operation. The present circumstances, in which China has been so assertive and in some cases grasping, Japan is seen as a counter-balance, any identification with the United States notwithstanding. China has also been a major investor in South-east Asia, often surpassing Japan, but its territorial grabs have made some countries cautious.

Looked at from New Zealand’s point of view, Japan’s encouragement of the rule of law and the peaceful resolution of territorial and other disputes is commendable. Abe’s South-East Asian policies serve New Zealand’s interests as well.

There are, nevertheless, constraints on Abe himself and how much he can accomplish regionally or internationally. As mentioned above, he has set his heart on revising the pacifist clause in Japan’s Constitution. Legislation has already been passed to reinterpret that part of the Constitution, but getting the Constitution rewritten or expunging the pacifist clause is going to be much more difficult. He has appealed to and stirred up a rather extreme form of nationalism in Japan as part of his domestic support for revising the Constitution.¹ This has alienated China and South Korea in particular and upset some South-east Asian countries. Various restraints have been imposed on Japan’s mainstream media. A pity. In the new era of politics in the United States and elsewhere, an upholding of the world liberal order is likely to be the defining task of the coming age.

NOTE
1. I argue this out at length in my article ‘Old attitudes in Japan’s new leadership’, NZ International Review, vol 39, no 6 (2014), pp.10–13.

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Many aspects of our Pacific neighbourhood are changing. Fiji’s move towards democracy, always tumultuous, remains uncertain; governance issues in Papua New Guinea, the region’s largest and richest country, and elsewhere in Melanesia, particularly, hamper economic and social development and threaten political stability; Tonga wrestles with record indebtedness; and throughout the region, especially in Kiribati and Tuvalu and on low-lying islands elsewhere, rising ocean levels add a daunting additional challenge to the many others already faced by fragile communities.

Regionally, what has been called a ‘New Pacific Diplomacy’ has emerged and is said to be changing the substance and form of regional co-operation.1

It arises from the increasingly robust Pacific issue-based identity which has emerged over the past decade. It has galvanised Pacific leaders to increased regional activity and to greater participation on the global stage. A growing resistance to the traditional New Zealand–Australian-led orthodoxy has contributed significantly. And intensifying intra-regional dynamics have also informed and are shaping regional co-operation. Pacific states are very much becoming the principal players in their own region, their own ‘agents of change’. Accordingly, regional structures (including the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), the Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP), the Pacific Small Islands Developing States and the Polynesian Leaders Group) have developed. These changes are also driven by a perception that the former metropolitan powers Australia and New Zealand have become increasingly assertive in pursuing their own agendas in the region. As a result, the past ‘established order’ comprising the Pacific Islands Forum and its Secretariat and the organisations linked to them has faced intensified competition.

In the background, but impacting directly on the Pacific Islands region itself, dramatic changes are re-shaping the regional and global geopolitical landscape. The resurgence of a more assertive China is the single most significant factor; and now the United States, under the Trump administration, is likely to be startlingly unpredictable. At the same time, some islands countries have demonstrated confidence in their relations with the new powers in the region, especially China.

For New Zealand itself, an accompanying trend in recent years, related to all these national and regional changes, has been the overall reduction in its influence. This article contends that closer attention to New Zealand’s role in the Pacific, requiring examination of current policies — where they succeed and how they might be improved — could benefit both New Zealand’s interests and those of our neighbours.

There is some justification for a pride some New Zealanders express in their country’s record in the Pacific. But account also needs to be taken of New Zealand’s historical record, including acquiescence in blackbirding, early greedy imperial ambitions and some significant failures in the early stages of New Zealand administrations in the Pacific, particularly in Samoa.

**Pacific identity**

By the late 20th century, however, many New Zealand leaders spoke eloquently about the development of the country’s Pacific identity and the role they saw for New Zealand in its Pacific neighbourhood. By 1991, then Foreign Minister Don McKinnon was able to say emphatically ‘the debate over whether New

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Anna Powles and Michael Powles argue that a reconsideration of New Zealand’s approach to the Pacific Islands region is warranted.

Many aspects of our Pacific neighbourhood are changing. Fiji’s move towards democracy, always tumultuous, remains uncertain; governance issues in Papua New Guinea, the region’s largest and richest country, and elsewhere in Melanesia, particularly, hamper economic and social development and threaten political stability; Tonga wrestles with record indebtedness; and throughout the region, especially in Kiribati and Tuvalu and on low-lying islands elsewhere, rising ocean levels add a daunting additional challenge to the many others already faced by fragile communities.

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Zealand is a South Pacific nation is over. This is home.\textsuperscript{2}

During its presidency of the Security Council in July 2015, New Zealand sponsored an open debate on the peace and security challenges facing small islands developing states, with New Zealand stating that it was a ‘Pacific country with a significant stake… in our region’.\textsuperscript{3}

Moreover, in recent decades immigration from the Pacific has resulted in a growing Pasifika minority in New Zealand which is becoming increasingly influential politically, socially and culturally. Particularly with the increasing co-operation of Pasifika with Maori, the face of New Zealand and expectations of its role as a good regional neighbour are certainly changing.

This article is the first part of a project that aims to identify aspects of New Zealand’s policies in the Pacific that warrant consideration and debate. The policy issues raised will then be discussed more fully in a later phase of the project. We have chosen to divide New Zealand policies into three categories and have selected for highlighting some examples from each. The three categories are of policies which:

- have widespread support and are widely regarded as successful or essential — it is fully acknowledged that most of New Zealand’s policies in the Pacific are in this category
- are at least partially successful and should be continued subject to possible changes or adjustments, and
- we suggest should be stopped, radically changed, or replaced by quite different policies; in respect of these policy areas public discussion and debate seems justified.

Successful policies

Not surprisingly, many New Zealand’s Pacific policies are in the category of policies that are largely successful. While particular aspects of these policies may require review from time to time, they are broadly regarded positively in New Zealand and the region. They include:

- \textit{The Treaty of Friendship with Samoa}. Bipartisan New Zealand support for the treaty, concluded in 1962 seven months after Samoa became independent, is not in doubt. It is seldom mentioned publicly, however, and arguably it could be given greater prominence because the obligations it imposes are both symbolic and important practically. The case for doing so would be based on:
  - the past history and present closeness of the relationship,
  - the willingness over several years of Samoa’s government to support New Zealand bilaterally, regionally and, far from least, on the international stage, and
  - the growing proportion of New Zealanders of Samoan heritage whose political, social and cultural influence and contribution to New Zealand as a whole are increasingly significant.

- \textit{Transnational and organised crime in the region}. In an address to the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs on 25 August 2016, Defence Minister Gerry Brownlee cited transnational crime in the Pacific as undermining the sovereignty of Pacific nations and said it was consequently a threat to New Zealand. The most recent \textit{Defence Assessment} noted that some of the major features of the strategic environment visible in the last five years include the rising sophistication, range and number of actors operating within New Zealand’s exclusive economic zone, Southern Ocean and the Pacific Islands.\textsuperscript{4}

  Transnational and organised crime is not a new phenomenon in Pacific Islands states, which are particularly vulnerable to it because of porous and weak borders enabling illegal logging, people and drug trafficking, money laundering, small arms trafficking, as well as fisheries exploitation — and increasingly electronic crime. Transnational and organised crime is recognised as a substantial and multi-dimensional driver of fragility, as well as a cross-cutting threat to sustainable development.\textsuperscript{5}

  New Zealand Customs Service and New Zealand Police involvement and co-operation in the region has become significant as a consequence, although there remain major unknowns about transnational and organised crime in the Pacific. To address this, the New Zealand government partially funded the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime threat assessment of transnational organised crime in the Pacific released in 2016. The same year a 2016 New Zealand Police report, \textit{Illicit drugs in the Pacific Islands — Sources, distribution and the risk to New Zealand}, highlighted the role of Pacific islands as transit points to the lucrative drug markets of New Zealand and Australia.

  While the direction of New Zealand policy in this field is uncontroversial, discussion is needed on the adequacy of the resources provided to implement it.

- \textit{Labour mobility}. New Zealand created a precedent in arranging schemes to enable Pacific Islanders to come for seasonal work in this country. Australia has since developed similar arrangements. Current policies are welcome, having become important both to communities in the Pacific and industries in New Zealand. Issues deserving attention relate to the adequacy of wage rates and the safeguards in place to protect workers.

Partly successful

Many of New Zealand’s policies in and towards the Pacific fall into the category of partly successful, warranting further consideration. That they have been partly successful should be fully acknowledged, but there are also policies which, through changed circumstances or simply the passage of time, deserve renewed discussion or consideration. They include:

- \textit{Pacific regionalism and New Zealand’s role}. Since the creation of the Pacific Islands Forum (as the South Pacific Forum) in 1971, successive New Zealand governments have strongly promoted the advantages of regional co-operation and have continued to provide significant resources in support of regional institutions in the Pacific Islands region. This policy, generally consistent with islands government priorities, should be continued. But the manner in which New Zealand does so, and particular policies on some regional issues, warrant reconsideration:
  - \textit{Islands agency and ownership of Pacific Island issues}. There is a strong belief in the region and on the part of experienced
observers of the Pacific that in recent decades New Zealand and Australia have become increasingly forceful in promoting their own policies and views at regional policy meetings. (Examples include promotion of the unpopular ‘Pacific Plan’ in the early 2000s and, more recently, decisions on climate change and decolonisation.)

- New Zealand and Australia have taken positions in regional trade negotiations which, justifiably or not, have resulted in unusual antagonism on the part of Pacific Islands negotiating partners. (One senior Pacific Islands official asked whether, from a Pacific viewpoint, the non-reciprocal trade agreement (SPARTECA) proposed by Robert Muldoon’s government in 1980 had been the ‘high point’ of New Zealand’s policies in this field.)

- The New Pacific Diplomacy by Greg Fry (Australian National University) and Sandra Tarte describes a Pacific regionalism in which there is growing disquiet with the roles played by New Zealand and Australia. They argue that, largely as a result, the region is entering a new era in which islands governments, particularly Fiji, are wresting increasing control of regionalism from Australia and New Zealand, not least by the creation of region-wide and sub-regional organisations from which New Zealand and Australia are excluded. These views should give us pause and encourage reconsideration of New Zealand policies relating to the pursuit of New Zealand interests in the region.

Issues for debate could include:

- New Zealand, consistent with its long-established support for self-determination, could strongly support the growth of sub-regional forums desired by islands countries.

- New Zealand should seek to remain neutral regarding Fiji’s leadership ambitions, given that the final shape of co-operative institutions in the region is unlikely to be settled for some time.

- It should also respect the Polynesian element in New Zealand’s Pacific identity and consequential regional expectations.

- New Zealand should bear in mind that Australian policies in the Pacific do not necessarily reflect New Zealand interests and some policy divergence must be inevitable.

- Most importantly, New Zealand should try to support Pacific Islands views and positions on regional issues and not seek to impose its own.

**Unique challenges**

Some of the smallest Pacific Islands countries and territories, already facing the vulnerabilities arising from remoteness, economic fragility and rising oceans which most small islands countries share, also have particular challenges of their own. These arise from the particular links they chose to retain with their former administering powers. The countries and territories concerned include the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau (in relation to New Zealand), the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and the Marshall Islands (in relation to the United States) and, depending on the outcome of their decolonisation processes, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna (in relation to France). The several remaining American colonies in the Pacific, like Guam and American Samoa, and also the Micronesian Associated States, face similar challenges. The special links included the right for their citizens to live and work in the country that was their former administering power.

The lure of higher living standards has proven irresistible to people in many small islands states. The social and economic viability of these diminishing communities is clearly at risk. A former premier of Niue, Young Vivian, has reflected sadly:

> “We have been going through a dark period for quite some time because you cannot have a nation with very few people and we are not able to keep our people in our little country. Both my children are living in New Zealand and I cannot persuade them to come back. We are trying to keep alive our language and our traditions — but what for?”

A former president of the Federated States of Micronesia, John Haglelgam, spoke in similar terms of his country’s plight:

> “When you go around the villages in all the states of FSM, some of the villages are ghost villages. Very few people remain...”

New Zealand could usefully promote major research aimed at finding ways of securing social viability, particularly through increased job creation in, for example, tourism-related industries, in these particular islands states.

**Ocean resources**

The late Professor Epeli Hau‘ofa of Tonga spoke of Pacific peoples’ *ownership* of their ocean’s resources. Recently, Pacific leaders have spoken more realistically of a special *custodianship* of the Pacific Ocean and its resources.

Currently the region’s most valuable economic resource is the migratory tuna fishery. The tuna catch is said to be worth over $5 billion annually. While New Zealand has its own commercial interest in this resource, over many years it has supported the aim of Pacific Islands countries to increase their share of the revenue from the catch. Progress has been made, not least through the efforts of the Forum Fisheries Agency and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (strongly supported by New Zealand). But distant water fishing countries in Asia and even Europe still profit excessively from the resource.

New Zealand’s strong interest in helping the Pacific Islands countries achieve and maintain economic sustainability would justify a comprehensive and public review of current policy settings in this field.

The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency report released early this year estimated that losses in the fisheries sector due to illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing equated to US$616 million per year.

The main perpetrators are legally licensed fishing vessels, with illegal fishing by licensed fleets accounting for over 95 per cent...
of the total illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. In short, legal fishing fleets are not declaring approximately 20 per cent of their catch. In a 2016 three-month-long Royal New Zealand Navy and fisheries operation, more than 70 per cent of the tuna fishing boats in the Pacific Ocean inspected were found to be in violation of the law.

Investing in policing and monitoring fisheries by strengthening maritime security capabilities, as New Zealand’s 2016 Defence Budget acknowledges, is one part of the response but more needs to be done at the compliance level, particularly at the transnational and inter-governmental levels. Strengthening regional agreements such as the Niue Treaty and parties to the Nauru Agreement through asset and technical support would be important.

Seabed mineral resources are potentially just as valuable as the tuna fishery resource. Islands countries have the rights under international law to enormous riches within their exclusive economic zones. But the challenges facing mineral exploration and environmentally safe extraction are daunting. Questions for consideration include:

- Possible active support for the steps already being taken by islands countries to establish an integrated framework in legal, fiscal and environmental areas in relation to seabed mining.
- Whether New Zealand’s own policies adequately reflect both its own direct interest in an appropriate share of the Pacific’s resources and its aim of supporting the economic viability of Pacific Islands countries.

**Development co-operation**

New Zealand is seen in the region as a donor which pursues rigid conditionality in its aid. It is mostly aimed at the promotion of good governance. The poor state of governance in many countries of the region today demonstrates that such policies have been seriously unsuccessful. Moreover, respected academic observers of development in the region have criticised the ethical basis for such policies and also the emphasis on donors’ own economic and political interests within their aid programmes.

These issues, and alternative ways of promoting improved governance (mentioned below), should be debated.

**Climate change**

New Zealand has not been prepared to reflect in its own policies on climate change the almost desperate concern of our Pacific neighbours, some of whom will be grievously affected. But doing so could be costly for New Zealand. At the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in 2015, leaders called for a unified forum position to take to the United Nations Climate Change Summit (COP 21) in November later that year. Specifically, leaders called for key shared commitments on mitigation and emission targets that would restrict global warming temperature rise to 1.5° Celsius — a 2° Celsius target is thought to risk the survival of the low-lying Pacific Islands states. However, New Zealand’s — and Australia’s — emission reduction targets (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)) — are inconsistent with keeping global temperature rise below 2° let alone the 1.5° called for by Pacific leaders. A 2015 Oxfam report, *A Question of Survival*, claims that the New Zealand and Australian governments are ‘threatening the very survival of some Pacific nations’.

New Zealand’s leadership on climate change will be increasingly important following the Trump administration’s statement that it will eliminate the Climate Action Plan and with it funding for climate initiatives. The policy issues should be debated. Vaguely positive statements by New Zealand politicians to the effect that Pacific Islands ‘climate change refugees’ (not covered by the Refugees Convention) would be given access to New Zealand as a destination of last resort should be clarified.

**Security issues**

- **External influences:** China is today a major influence in the Pacific Islands region. Most Pacific Islands countries have chosen to engage with China and most have done so confidently and successfully. But apprehensions regarding China’s presence relate to over-indebtedness, immigration and social dislocation, the possible renewal of Beijing/Taipei competition, and a concern that China might seek support, based on its aid relationships, for foreign policy positions — as the United States has done several times with Micronesian states.

Given the obvious importance to New Zealand of stability and prosperity in our immediate neighbourhood and also the economic and overall significance to us of our relations with China, following closely these sensitive issues will be critical for us — and handling them skilfully will possibly be one of the most challenging diplomatic issues New Zealand will face in the years ahead.

It will be crucial that New Zealand (on its own behalf alone, of course) ensures that both Pacific Islands and Chinese governments are fully aware of our interest and, when any arise, of our concerns.

- **Regional and domestic security:** Tools available in the region to protect and promote security include the mechanisms provided for by the Biketawa Declaration, adopted by Pacific Islands Forum leaders in 2000 and under which there have been deployments of military, police or civilian personnel to Solomon Islands (2003), Nauru (2004) and Tonga (2006).

Given the passage of time since Biketawa was agreed, a review of the continued adequacy of its mechanisms would be appropriate.

**Pacific representation**

Several aspects of New Zealand’s diplomacy in its home region are crucial for both domestic New Zealand reasons and for the country’s security and well-being:

- New Zealand governments must be well informed on all aspects of political, economic and social developments in the Pacific Islands region,
- they must be fully equipped to maintain and enhance relationships with other Pacific Islands countries, both providing appropriate support when requested and representing New Zealand interests,
- supporting economic and social development in the Pacific Is-
lands region will remain a high priority for any New Zealand government, and
- New Zealand must be and be seen to be a responsible and supportive member of the Pacific Islands community.

Former Prime Minister Robert Muldoon controversially said that, except for the Pacific, New Zealand’s foreign policy was trade. This assertion has been much criticised. But it was interesting that Muldoon did acknowledge the importance for New Zealand of its diplomacy in its home region.

Is New Zealand sufficiently well-equipped diplomatically in the Pacific region? In most parts of the world where the role of New Zealand’s diplomats is regarded as particularly challenging (East Asia, Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe) it has been the usual practice for many years to appoint as senior New Zealand representatives diplomats with training and professional experience in the field of diplomacy. In many cases these diplomats will have been trained in the local languages of the countries in which they serve. (New Zealand’s current ambassadors in China, Japan and Russia are all in this category). This foreign language training is undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, making use of appropriate language training institutions, usually overseas. The investment is regarded as invaluable in its return to New Zealand through the increased professionalism of its diplomats.

For the Pacific, however, where New Zealand has some twelve diplomatic posts, it also has a much lower proportion of professional diplomats heading its posts than in any other region of the world. And while significant sums are spent annually on training New Zealand diplomats in Asian languages, only a fraction of that is spent on training in Pacific languages.

A consequence of current policies is that while New Zealand diplomats who arrive as ambassadors in Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Moscow and more are frequently fluent in the local languages, this is the exception rather than the rule in Suva, Apia, Nukualofa and the like.

Discussion of current policies is warranted.

Possible changes
There are policies which could be changed or discontinued; also possible alternative or new policies. These include:

- Decolonisation, self-determination and New Zealand’s role:
  A core aspect of New Zealand’s bipartisan policies in the Pacific has been consistent support for self-determination. The most recent Pacific Islands Forum leaders’ meeting decided to admit French Polynesia and New Caledonia to full forum membership. This involves a clear break with policies followed since the forum was founded, including the requirement that only independent or fully self-governing applicants should be granted full forum membership. The decision gives the French colonial regimes in the Pacific, and through them Paris, involvement in the private deliberations of Pacific leaders on one of the most sensitive issues on the Pacific agenda. Startlingly, the decision was taken just as the political situation in New Caledonia, where an independence referendum is to be held in 2018, appears increasingly unsettled. This policy change warrants public debate and discussion.

  In some of the remaining US territories in the Pacific there is increasing interest in self-determination. If requested, New Zealand should support such interest.

  On West Papua, Pacific Islands countries are currently split between those which support independence and those which accept Indonesia’s jurisdiction over the province. New Zealand respects the current borders of Indonesia. But additional steps, some of which are no doubt under consideration, could be:
  - New Zealand should encourage dialogue between the protagonists.
  - It should urge Indonesia to more effectively respect the human rights of West Papuans.
  - Similarly, New Zealand should urge Indonesia to accord the people of West Papua greater autonomy.
  - And New Zealand should keep closely in touch with both sides and be prepared to seek a role which could be acceptable to both.

New Zealand should continue to support self-determination for the people of Bougainville, an issue likely to become more contentious as the independence referendum agreed for 2019 approaches.

Top priority
Is New Zealand following Australian policies too closely? New Zealand should obviously take careful account of Australian views on Pacific issues, but over recent decades we seem to have regarded following the Australian lead as our top priority.

New Zealand’s own influence and relationships with its islands neighbours are thought by observers to have suffered as a result. It is said that while Australia tends to see the Pacific Islands region from a security perspective, New Zealand interests are increasingly linked to demography — the rapidly increasing number, and influence, of Pasifika in New Zealand. And New Zealand’s influence depends more on aspects of its own ethnic mix and cultural perspectives which many New Zealanders and Pacific Islanders share.

Would allowing some policy differences between New Zealand and Australia harm the relationship unduly? (Australia seems to have been relaxed in publicly distancing itself from New Zealand — and indeed the United States — in December 2016 over a very publicly contentious Security Council resolution on the Middle East, on which New Zealand, then a member of the council, had played a major role.) Certainly, over the issue of Pacific Islands Forum membership, Australia is said to have agreed to discussions with Fiji without consulting New Zealand.

On the other hand, it can be argued that with the growing number of influential external powers operating in the Pacific, New Zealand’s small voice can increasingly be drowned out. Seeking common positions with Australia and working jointly to pursue them could be a more productive way of getting the New
New Zealand voice heard on at least some issues. These issues warrant thorough consideration.

**Governance failure**

* Nauru: Many observers attribute the near-complete failure of governance in Nauru largely to the Australian role in creating a detention centre on the island to hold refugee ‘boat people’. This and its former role as administering power strongly to Australia’s responsibility to help the Nauruan people out of the political, economic and social mess their country is in. But New Zealand also had a trusteeship responsibility regarding Nauru and arguably could be more actively involved, not least in persuading Australia to take more effective steps to improve the situation, involving especially the future of the detention centre on the island.

Good governance and better ways of encouraging it need consideration. Western aid donors have tried to encourage support for what are regarded as Western governance processes. Much aid is made conditional on specific ‘good governance’ conditions. But the New Zealand Ministry of Defence, Defence Assessment 2014, p.34.

**NOTES**

4. NZIIA Publications

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New Zealand International Review 21
A week is a long time in politics. Half a century in Chinese politics is both an eternity and a blink of the eye.

In this article, and in the second part to be published in the next issue of this journal, I want to consider China’s place in the world during the past 50 years. I will describe the evolution of China’s global role from a time when Beijing was ending its alliance with Moscow, through a period when it came close to forging a second major alliance, this time with Washington, to the China of today, strong, independent and self-assured.

Much of what follows will be about China and America, and I make no apology for that. The United States is still the greatest power in the world, and through the passing years it has been successively China’s most important enemy, near-ally and not-so-friendly adversary. The relationship between China and the United States, which the Chinese now want to portray as ‘a new type of great power relations’, to use their phrase, is also a vital one for all of us in New Zealand, for on it depends the stability and prosperity of the Asia–Pacific region, including those of New Zealand.

China’s rapid evolution into a major power is often considered primarily with regard to its domestic developments. But it has also taken place in dramatically changing international circumstances. Understanding China’s evolving global role can help us understand why China’s external relations have assumed the form they take today. It can also help us understand the outlook of China’s current leadership. Nearly all China’s most senior leaders are now in their sixties, and shaped their view of the world from China’s experiences during the last half-century, just as many Western leaders have done the same with China. Broadly speaking, the same is likely to apply to the new leadership that emerges in China later this year (2017), when the Communist Party is due to hold its next Congress, the nineteenth since it began in 1921.

Control reasserted
Fifty years ago China was isolated and riven internally by bitter in-fighting and unrest. The Cultural Revolution, launched by Chairman Mao Zedong as a way of reasserting his own control and his own vision of how China should become communist, was entering its most destructive phase. All China’s ambassadors but one were being called home, and there was virtually no contact between Beijing and the outside world. This included Washington DC, which still recognised the Guomindang government under Mao’s old enemy Chiang Kai-shek in Taipei.

Elsewhere China’s foreign policy efforts had come to little. Chairman Mao had tried to develop the idea of an intermediate zone between the two great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. He had once illustrated the idea to an American visitor with a row of teacups — America at one end, Russia at the other, ‘with matches and cigarette packages crowded in between’ to show the space between them. But by 1966 he had made little headway, particularly among China’s few friends in Asia. In Indonesia, in particular, hundreds of thousands of members of the huge, China-friendly Communist Party were being massacred after the anti-Sukarno coup there.

Most importantly, the People’s Republic of China’s 30-year alliance with the Soviet Union, its main external commitment, and to date its only one, had fallen to pieces. Signed by Mao and Stalin in Moscow in 1950, at one point the alliance was going to remake history. Soviet-style communism as revised by Stalin, who was af-

In the past half century China has gone from being an isolated country in the throes of Maoist self-destruction to being a regional and even global player of growing authority. During this time it saw out its first major alliance, with the Soviet Union, and engaged in various kinds of accommodation with the United States before achieving its current state of self-confident independence. In coming to terms with Washington in the early 1970s China took one of the most dramatic turns of events in the 20th century, a step that was designed to offset a military threat from the erstwhile Soviet ally.
ter all communism’s first great revisionist, was to be adopted by China, so that the great mass of people on the Eurasian continent would give concrete reality to the utopian ideas of two German emigres.

But from its early days the alliance came apart on differences of ideology, personalities and power politics. Stalin’s successors Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev developed a cautious, on and off, modus vivendi with the United States and its capitalist allies, and Chinese leaders grew distrustful of them. As their distrust grew, so did their rhetoric. In 1957 Mao shocked his communist allies by declaring at a conference that ‘if worse comes to worst and half of mankind dies, the other half will remain, while imperialism will be razed to the ground and the world will become socialist’. If the West invaded Russia, Mao went on, the Russians could retreat to the Urals, where the Chinese would rescue them. ‘I looked at [Mao]… closely,’ Khrushchev recalled later. ‘I couldn’t tell from his face whether he was joking or not.’ In the 1960s Mao, Deng Xiaoping and others began to warn of the dangers of Soviet revisionism. Mao led the drive against revisionism partly, of course, because he was going to use it to destroy his opponents at home.

**Territorial dispute**
The dispute with the Russians soon took on a territorial component. To begin with it seemed insignificant — ‘a small discrepancy on maps… very easy to settle’, as Premier Zhou Enlai described it. But it did not turn out to be so easy after all. After fruitless boundary negotiations Mao stirred the embers of hostility by suggesting that China might have broader designs on Russian territory. He told some visiting Japanese that China had ‘not yet presented its account’ for extensive lands in the Russian Far East taken from China by treaty during the Qing dynasty.

Moscow responded by giving the dispute a military dimension. Soviet forces were stationed along the Sino-Soviet frontier, so that by the late 1960s there were perhaps 45 divisions there. Was their purpose mainly defensive or offensive? No one seemed sure. One of Mao’s rivals, Wang Ming, was living in Moscow, still a member of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee. Perhaps some people thought he might turn out to be useful. Frontier clashes between Chinese and Soviet troops in March and August 1969 gave rise to deeper concerns. In an often forgotten démarche, Moscow gave China a three-month deadline to come to terms. There were reports that the Russians were considering a pre-emptive strike on China’s still nascent nuclear facilities. Two days before the deadline the Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin changed route of his plane in Dushanbe, of all places, and flew to Beijing, where he had an emergency meeting at the airport with his Chinese counterpart, Zhou Enlai. When his party left, Zhou and his colleagues lined up on the runway to wave goodbye. A showdown was averted, but it looked as if it had been a close thing.

During the late 1960s China also saw itself threatened from the south. Under President Lyndon Johnson the United States was becoming involved in fighting a full-scale war in Vietnam. Beyond Vietnam was China. Thousands of engineers from the Chinese PLA went to North Vietnam. Young Chinese soldiers drove supply trucks down the Ho Chi Minh trail, including one I later taught at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou. The war soon assumed large proportions, and Mao began to worry that China would be drawn into a direct confrontation with the Americans as it had been in the Korean War in 1950, where he had lost a son. He even talked about China being attacked on two or three fronts, with Moscow and Washington collaborating, perhaps with Japan.

Careful signalling by both sides helped prevent a direct clash between the Chinese and the Americans. But by 1968–69 Mao and his generals — or at any rate those still able to function in the wake of the Cultural Revolution — seem to have decided, for all the bravado, that contending with threats on two fronts was too much. At least one of them should be reduced to China’s gain. The result was the gradual thaw in relations not with Moscow, as many might have anticipated earlier, but with Washington. Better relations with Moscow would have to wait until much later.

**Dramatic shift**
The ensuing volte-face in China’s foreign relations, which only someone as daring as Mao could have decided on, was one of the most dramatic turns of events in the 20th century. It entailed China coming to terms with the very enemy, America, whose appeasement it had earlier blamed on Moscow, to offset a Russian military threat that had come into being largely because of China’s own actions. As such it sought to heal a self-inflicted wound.

That said, it takes two to tango. The détente that ensued between China and the United States could not have taken place without an equal interest on the part of US President Richard Nixon and his Bismarckian national security adviser Henry Kissinger. The two of them plotted — there is no other word — to engage China, both as a way of ending America’s unwinnable war in Vietnam — where they thought China had the whip hand — and exploiting the Sino-Soviet dispute to America’s Cold War advantage.

After a year or so of secret diplomacy Nixon went to Beijing in early 1972, as we all know, to meet Chairman Mao and shake his-by-now frail hand. Nixon and Mao both prepared carefully for the event. Nixon worried about using chopsticks and forgetting his talking points. Mao had every move of the American advance parties closely scrutinised. When an agent told him the Americans loved the Chinese candies in their rooms, down to eating the wrappers, he had a special night shift pack new, freshly lacquered cans loved the Chinese candies in their rooms, down to eating the wrappers, he had a special night shift pack new, freshly lacquered boxes of sweets, which were thrust still wet into the hands of the bemused Americans as they boarded their plane home. So at least I was told much later by his aide and interpreter Zhang Hanzhi.

When he arrived in Beijing, Nixon found himself in an austere land, shaken to the core by the events of the previous years. Watching Premier Zhou Enlai greet Nixon at a deserted Beijing airport with a small honour guard, some were reminded of the famous
old story of the great 3rd-century Chinese general Zhuge Liang. Confronted by a large army at a time when his own forces were severely depleted, Zhuge is said to have sat on top of the gateway to his city with just a couple of pageboys and calmly played the lute. Convinced there was a ruse, and that Zhuge was concealing massive resources, his enemy gave way and retreated.

**Shared hostility**

The essence of the new relationship was, as mentioned, a shared hostility to the Soviet Union. The most pressing issue for the Americans was getting out of Vietnam, and the greatest overriding problem was Taiwan. Then, as now, Beijing insisted that Taiwan was part of China and should be reunited with the Chinese mainland. Then, as now, more or less, Taiwan accepted in principle that it was part of China. As Nixon put it in a note he wrote for himself before setting out from Washington: ‘1. Taiwan — most crucial. 2. V. Nam — most urgent.’

Mao took a lofty view of the new relationship, choosing to assume the high ground rather than allowing himself to be bogged down in detail. This was in character, for he saw the world with a dry, realist eye for history, mainly Chinese history. In 1972 China was beset by two super-powers, but in his view the Soviet menace was the greater one. So he gave his American visitors the impression, disingenuous or not, that that was all that mattered. Other, more mundane issues could come later. As he told Nixon, ‘The small issue is Taiwan; the big issue is the world… . We can do without them [the Chinese in Taiwan] for the time being, and let it come after 100 years.’

The ensuing détente between China and the United States had a dramatic effect not just on American attitudes to China but also on China’s standing worldwide. Taiwan was expelled from the United Nations and replaced by the People’s Republic. Various developed countries recognised or upgraded their recognition of China, among them Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Others followed suit, including three of the five founding members of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations).

Relations with China’s wartime enemy Japan were also soon to be transformed. In 1978 Japan and China signed a Peace and Friendship Treaty. This event was almost as dramatic as Nixon’s visit to China. No Chinese representative in any guise had signed the post-war San Francisco Treaty between Japan and Allied forces, and relations between Tokyo and Beijing had been in limbo ever since. The 1978 treaty did not, controversially, contain any provisions for reparations, but it did usher in a period of flourishing economic co-operation.

In the end, though, it turned out to be false start. Relations between Beijing and Tokyo started to turn sour again from the 1990s on, and gradually acquired the troubling contentiousness that characterise them today. As people in Europe discovered, the wounds of the Second World War needed generations to heal, even with deft politics — even, I mean, when people on both sides could go over what happened without political interference, decidedly not the case in China or indeed Japan.

**Opening glitches**

Only in a few cases was the People’s Republic of China’s new opening to the world less obviously successful. The first was its relations with India, still hurting from the effects of its devastating defeat in its border war with China in 1962. It took decades more for this wound to heal. The second was China’s relations with its comrade-in-arms Vietnam. Once the Americans had lost the war in Vietnam, old attitudes and pent-up resentments quickly came into the open. These included Vietnamese resentment, still evident today, at the 1974 occupation by the PLA (People’s Liberation Army) of the Paracel island group (called Xi Sha in Chinese and Hoang Sa in Vietnamese) in the South China Sea — the first sign that conflicting claims to islands in the sea could spell serious trouble. When the Vietnamese Army occupied Cambodia in 1978–79, bringing down China’s egregious allies the Khmer Rouge, China taught Vietnam a lesson — as Deng Xiaoping patronisingly put it — by invading northern Vietnam, then withdrawing again.

This was the fourth offensive the PLA had been involved in in less than twenty years, discounting the Cultural Revolution (the earlier offensives having been against India in 1962, the Soviet Union in 1969 and over the Paracels in 1974). It turned out to be the final major conflict the PLA was to fight up to the present day. That is worth bearing in mind when there is talk, as there is increasingly nowadays, of Chinese military aggression.

One underlying motive for the Chinese attack, which the now China-friendly United States acquiesced in, was to show the Vietnamese that their alliance with the Soviet Union, then strong, could not be depended on. As the Chinese military strategist Sun Zi put it in his *Art of War* — still used for PLA training — ‘The best warfare is striking at the enemy’s plans. The second best is striking at his alliances’.

Looking back later on the 1970s, Henry Kissinger thought that their common anti-Soviet cause brought China and America closer to forming a de facto alliance than at any time before or after. They certainly seemed close to it in 1979–80, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. At that time this reckless action seemed to suggest a relentless Soviet spread that could only by stopped by a China–US united front. Only in retrospect do we know that the invasion added to the stresses and strains that were to contribute to the downfall of the Soviet Union just a decade or so later.

**Gradual drift**

Subsequently, in the 1980s, China and America gradually drifted apart. Under President Ronald Reagan the US government’s failure to deal with the Taiwan issue, particularly the contentious Taiwan Relations Act passed by Congress in 1979 to sustain support to Taiwan; the slow thaw in Sino-Soviet relations; and a reappraisal in Beijing of Mao and his policies, including, evidently, his policy of letting Sino-Soviet relations sink so low — all contributed to this gradual drifting apart. As he spearheaded dramatic changes to
economic policy at home, China’s new paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, decided to opt for a more independent foreign policy. Still, Washington and Beijing continued to share at least some assumptions about Soviet power until the late 1980s. At that point the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, took concerted steps to deal with the three problems which, as Deng Xiaoping insisted, had to be solved, namely Cambodia, Afghanistan and the Russian military build-up on the Chinese border. Once these were dealt with the Washington–Beijing axis no longer really mattered.

The late 1970s were thus the heyday of China’s relations with the United States. Even in the 1980s there were other reasons why they still got on well. One was the very newness of their relationship, which meant that each side was curious about, interested in and even had a romantic attachment to the other. Another was a sense on the American side — and in China too — that Deng Xiaoping’s reforms were enabling China to evolve into a wealthier, more open and more liberal society. These changes for the better were matched by the sense that in international affairs China was moving towards becoming a responsible status quo power, increasingly active in the United Nations and less and less interested in lending support to Marxist-Leninists, especially in South-east Asia.

To set against these trends one other thing needs to be mentioned. This was the emergence of a strongly idealist trait in Western and particularly American policy-making. The 1975 Helsinki accords, signed to cement the Cold War arrangements in Europe, included human rights provisions, and these more or less unintentionally came to highlight the importance of human rights as an element of international diplomacy. In Washington President Jimmy Carter brought a commitment to human rights and social justice, and more generally to what Kissinger disparagingly referred to as ‘social engineering’, thus tempering the realpolitik of the Kissinger and Nixon era.

Since Carter, human rights and a desire to promote social reform abroad have, as we know, been a continuous element of American and, to a lesser extent, Western policy-making. These have aroused suspicion and anger on the part of those in China and elsewhere who are inclined to blame foreign influences for what are often internal pressures for reform. It is not surprising — though quite misguided, given the actual strength most non-governmental organisations wield — that not long ago Russian President Vladimir Putin is said to have warned President Xi Jinping of the dangers of American-funded activists and non-governmental organisations fomenting unrest in China.

Watershed years

This brings us to the watershed years of 1989 to 1991. The two signal events of those years were the collapse of the Soviet empire and the Tiananmen crisis in China. The sudden demise of Soviet communism brought to a final conclusion the Cold War, and shocked communists in China, who feared the same thing might happen there. It also brought to an end the long period of bipolarity — or tripolarity if you consider China’s role from the 1960s onwards — that had determined the shape of international relations for several decades.

After a brief, heady period when ‘the end of history’ and the triumph of liberal democracy seemed in Washington to be a plausible prospect, it became clear that the new, post-Cold War world would take on a very different nature. As we are only too aware today, it was to be characterised by incoherence and a growing globalisation of economic and financial resources, albeit one still resting on the vagaries of the inter-state system.

There was some discussion, including in China, of the emergence of a new multipolarity, along with a decline in the United States’ relative influence. Apart from China itself, Europe, Japan, India, Africa, South-east Asia and other regions were identified as possible future poles of power. But as the 1990s wore on it became clear that by key indices of wealth, military power and global reach the United States retained its position as the world’s first and — from then on — only truly great power. Elsewhere local preoccupations eclipsed the possibility of global or even muscular regional roles.

Elusive concept

These are too various and complicated, and too well understood, for there to be any need to revisit them here. Suffice it to say that multipolarity remained, and remains to this day, insufficient and elusive. China was left to deal with its neighbours and the broader global community on a piecemeal basis, and to learn to go on living with the United States as its principal global partner and adversary.

It has been argued that the hegemony of a single actor in world affairs provides for stability and dependability. But after the Soviet collapse left the United States supreme, this was not really the case for any player, including China. The end of Soviet power removed the core rationale for good China–US relations. And the Tiananmen crisis made matters worse. The shooting of hundreds of unarmed protesters around Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989 gave the China–US relationship a shock that took America years to get over. US President George H.W. Bush realised that relations with China had to be sustained, and ensured that they were (against considerable opposition), just as Deng Xiaoping did on his side. But they never regained their previous optimism, and in China conspiratorially-minded leaders took to warning of the dangers of the United States undermining China through a process called ‘peaceful evolution’.

The gradual emergence in the post-Soviet world of new attitudes in Beijing, reflecting China’s astounding economic growth and increasing self-assuredness from the 1990s on, will be considered in the second and final part of this article, to be carried in the next issue of this journal.
A deeply flawed legacy

Hugh Steadman provides an alternative view of President Obama’s foreign policy record.

The Obama presidency has come to an end. In regard to American foreign policy, there is good reason to feel nervous about the future. Of the two possible outcomes of the recent election, however, the one deemed most probable — Hillary Clinton’s election — would have been viewed as the more worrisome by some students of global affairs who had followed her history as secretary of state and her more recent belligerent pronouncements on Russia and Syria.

With the advantage of hindsight, the outside world should be grateful to Barack Obama for having provided a relatively peaceful intermission after the Bush years. Throughout his two terms in office, he was faced with massive opposition to his policies, both domestic and overseas. For much of the time, many of the obstacles came from an overwhelmingly Republican House of Representatives. Throughout both terms, opposition came from the neo-con colonised State Department, the Pentagon and associated security agencies, which constantly schemed for more aggressive overseas policies.

On his assuming office in January 2009, there were universal hopes, outside the military industrial complex, that Obama’s presidency would be more peaceable than that of his predecessor, George W. Bush. One of Obama’s first announcements was of his intention to close the Guantanamo detention centre. At the same time, he declared his intention to make the world nuclear free, which featured in the citation for his Nobel Peace Prize later that year: ‘The Committee has attached special importance to Obama’s vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons.’ Both Gitmo and the current investment in the United States’ nuclear weaponry provide a measure of the extent of the opposition offered to Obama by the circling hawks that blacken Washington’s skies. Gitmo, albeit with a reduced population, was still going strong, with no closure in sight, when his term ended.

For distant observers, the relationship between the office of the president and the multiple agencies of executive government can only be viewed through a cracked, distorting mirror. Every internal memorandum is classified to a greater or lesser extent and the media is tightly geared to publishing ‘leaks’ of whatever whichever agency wants the public to think is the truth. The observer can only draw inferences from the occasional whistle-blower and the manifestations of executive action, which occur, all too often, on other people’s territory.

Willing deference

It could well be argued that, generally speaking, Obama was a man of peace and compromise, who, lacking deep familiarity with military and foreign affairs, deferred too willingly to the advice of those who claimed to be more knowledgeable. Clinton, as his secretary of state throughout his first term, is a case in point. By the time he finally realised what was going on, it was too late and the defence and security establishments were prepared to by-pass him as yesterday’s man, no longer relevant to the future they had in mind.

Although the United States is back on its economic feet, despite the financial crisis inherited from Bush, after his eight years in office Obama’s legacy will be to have left America more divided than ever. Obama can hardly be held responsible for the development of such a schism, nor for his inability to remedy it. It could instead be argued that it was not his fault, but the fault of American society and the stresses imposed on it by the current phase of the imperial life-cycle.

Overseas, the failures, not of the president but of his advisors, are legion. With two salient and several minor exceptions, America’s enemies and friends overseas cannot help but be impressed by the tally of policy objectives not achieved and the extreme wastefulness and suffering caused by all these futile manoeuvrings. The only good thing to be said about such comprehensive failure is that it might lead the American foreign policy establishment to realise that their assessment of the global situation, and of their rightful place in it, is fundamentally flawed.

The newly installed Trump presidency would appear to offer the potential for a sea-change in US foreign policy. America’s foreign policy under President Obama’s administration included a number of failures — in nuclear policy, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa and in the Middle East. There were successes too. These include the avoidance of large-scale involvement of American forces in any ground war, the re-establishment of American dominance in Latin America and, most importantly, his agreement with China, which paved the way for the Paris Accord on climate change. The Obama administration will be remembered for providing a relatively peaceful intermission after the Bush years.
**Numerous failures**

Given constraints of time and space, each of the items listed on the Obama presidency score card below can only be dealt with in summary manner. Let me refer firstly to the failures, working on the assumption that Obama is fundamentally a man of peace and is deserving of the Nobel Prize that recognised him as such.

**Nuclear Policy.** On the global front in the same breath that he stated his intention to close Guantanamo, Obama declared his intention to set the world on a path that would ultimately see the disappearance of nuclear weapons. As he left office, the nuclear disarmament intention had morphed into a policy to spend around one trillion dollars in upgrading America’s nuclear arsenal. An excellent article in Foreign Policy in Focus shows just how the road to hell is paved with good intentions when frequented by the muggers of the military industrial complex.

Furthermore, with the deployment of American anti-ballistic missile weapons in Eastern Europe and South Korea, Obama’s administration alerted China and Russia to the dangers they face from America’s fast developing capacity to engineer a surprise first strike, after which their own ability to respond in kind would no longer be guaranteed. In so doing, Obama has allowed the destabilisation of the nuclear balance that has kept the world from nuclear war for the past 70 years. The Doomsday Clock’s hands have been moved from five to three minutes to midnight on Obama’s tour of duty.

**Eroded status**

*The US dollar as reserve currency.* America’s post-war economic preponderance, its high level of consumption and its ability to finance armed forces greater than those of the rest of the world put together has been based on the status of the dollar as the chosen currency for the conduct of world trade. It is clear that this status has been eroded over recent years. Some can convincingly argue that the wars on Muammar Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein and the threat of war against the ayatollahs of Iran were all to do with the elimination of potential breakaways from the dollar’s domination. However, the strength of the Chinese economy, with its magnetic draw on neighbouring states and business lobbies across the globe, has proved unstoppable. Last September this led to the IMF’s formalisation of the process by which the dollar will ultimately be replaced as an instrument of international trade.³

*European Union.* With Britons voting to leave the European Union, Wasington has lost its Trojan horse in Brussels. It will be that much more difficult for it to ensure cohesion between its member states. The almost contemptuous rejection of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, the TPP equivalent, has been the bitter fruit of the Bush administration, but it was to be the Obama administration that was forced to munch on it.

*Ukraine.* The biggest failures have been in the Middle East:

**Iraq:** Obama stopped the major ground commitment of US forces but was forced to recommit to contain ISIS. ISIS might have been the bitter fruit of the Bush administration, but it was to be the Obama administration that was forced to munch on it.

**Syria:** US and British planning for intervention in Syria began several years before the outbreak of the civil war in 2011.³ Again, Obama decided to listen to his ‘foreign affairs experts’, who, having done so much to instigate that conflict, were intent on seeing it through, despite adverse changes in the situation on the ground. As the man who could have stopped US support for the rebels,
Obama carries much of the responsibility for the destruction of Syria and for the terrorist and refugee crises to hit Europe. Worse, from the neo-con camp’s point of view (though it was their faction that opened up the opportunity), Obama has allowed the Russians to establish themselves in Syria, thereby gaining hugely in reputation and influence throughout the Middle East — entirely to America’s detriment.

Turkey: The CIA sponsored the residency of Erdoğan’s arch-enemy, Fethullah Gülen, in the United States. As the Turkish government has held Gülen chiefly responsible for the attempted coup against the Erdogan regime, it has taken the position that Washington itself was behind the coup. Whether or not the Turkish allegations are true (and on past form, it does not seem an unreasonable supposition), on Obama’s watch Turkey has been motivated to dissociate itself from NATO and the Western camp and move towards alliance with Iran, Russia and China.

Israel: Because of the strength of the Zionist lobby in America, Obama has been powerless to prevent continued Israeli expansion at Arab expense and the consequent loss of American respect in Arab eyes. (At least, in his final days in office, he was able to express his frustration with Benjamin Netanyahu by not vetoing Security Council Resolution 2334, which condemned Israel’s continued colonial expansion.)

Libya: With Hillary Clinton’s and Sarkozy’s enthusiastic support, Obama allowed NATO air power, in support of Islamic terrorists funded by Qatar and Saudi Arabia, to destabilise the Gaddafi regime and turn Libya, the most stable and prosperous of all African states, into a basket-case of feuding factions poised to destabilise neighbouring states.

Yemen: With American technical assistance and increased munition sales (at a recent count, $111 billion on Obama’s watch), Saudi Arabia has been enabled to bomb and blockade the unfortunate Yemen back into yet another American induced humanitarian disaster.

Afghanistan: On taking office, by allowing a surge of troops into the Afghan civil war, Obama regained some of the favour with the Pentagon that he had lost by pulling troops out of Iraq. Though the surge was intended to provide a definite end to the ‘scourge’ of the Taliban, it was not long before the United States and its NATO allies were forced to declare victory and leave the hapless puppet Afghani government to expend its own forces in the hopeless war against a Taliban that is now more active than it has ever been over the past ten years.

Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain. Nowhere have American policies in the Middle East been successful. As American oil dependency decreased, the Obama plan was to reduce American over-commitment in the Middle East and redeploy those resources to the far more economically significant ‘Pivot to Asia’. In classical ‘balance of power’ theory, the three blocs of Saudi Arabia (and Israel), Turkey and Iran were meant to balance each other out, thus leaving no call for American intervention. However, American and Saudi intervention in Syria brought Russia into the equation just as the apparently hostile intent behind the pivot to Asia aroused the interest of China. Now, both Turkey and Iran are in the process of integrating with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, as are the countries of the Indian sub-continent. This attempted rebalancing of Middle Eastern powers has greatly weakened the confidence of America’s allies Israel and Saudi Arabia in its support, while adding considerably to Russia’s prestige in the Middle East.

Though a huge success from the point of view of the American armaments industry, from the viewpoints of the longevity of the American Empire and the welfare of the peoples of the Middle East American Middle Eastern policy under Obama has been a stunning failure.

China’s rise

‘Pivot to Asia’. American policy has long been based on the premise that no other power centre should be allowed to develop to the point where it could challenge American global hegemony. The rising power with the potential to do just that is China. American policy has been reoriented to counter this ‘threat’ to its national interest. In the, now to be expected, unsuitable way of American foreign policy development, American policy-makers have succeeded in achieving the opposite. China was a fast-growing economic power with a relatively feeble military presence. The process whereby Chinese economic strength was to be allied with Russia’s advanced military technology has been hurried along by successive American policy initiatives. America’s hostile pivot has so alarmed China that it is now rapidly repositioning itself as a military as well as an economic power in order to counter America’s perceived hostile intentions.

The huge gravitational force that is the Chinese economy is drawing successive Asian countries into its orbit. It could be argued that fear of American encouragement of Islamic terrorism, as a useful instrument of destabilisation, has brought China and Russia into closer alliance. Thailand and the Philippines have similar vulnerabilities and similar reasons to worry about the possibility of America encouraging and assisting Islamist terrorists to gain a foothold in their countries.

The American failure or inability to grant a peace treaty to North Korea formally to end the hostilities that ceased in 1953 and the consequent development of North Korea’s nuclear capability remain major factors in the maintenance of the United States’ military alliances with South Korea and Japan. Should China manage to remove that threat, before Pyongyang develops an ICBM
capability that threatens the American homeland, this remaining lever of American power in Asia could disappear. Should China come too late to the party, however, it might be North Korea that disappears.

In the meantime, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a major American diplomatic initiative to isolate China economically, has failed at the same time as China, in developing such instruments as its own credit-rating agencies and its own international investment bank, is taking ever more effective steps to insulate itself from America’s capacity to impose economic sanctions against it. Australia is even considering the possibility of resuscitating the TPP, with China replacing the United States as the dominant partner — but that would be Trump’s and not Obama’s own-goal.

New power-centre

By occupying islands in the South China Sea and developing communications along the Great Silk Road, including building a port in Pakistan, China is able to remove any military threat that American naval power might pose to the economic lines of communications on which the Chinese economy is increasingly dependent. In short, the United States is unable effectively to oppose the development of a central Eurasian power-centre that will compete with, and might ultimately out-compete, its own. If anything, American foreign policy during Obama’s term will be shown to have accelerated this process, the ultimate outcome of which was forecast before the First World War by Halford Mackinder.9

Africa. A country by country review would fill a book. Suffice it to say that the US approach to exercising influence over the African continent has been almost entirely military under the recently formed Africa Command.10 The CIA and American Special Forces are heavily involved in supporting regimes in countries such as Uganda, Kenya and the Central African Republic, or in changing them in countries such as Libya, South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

In contrast, the Chinese, having no military bases in the region, are successfully competing asymmetrically. Having spent its money on fattening the wallets of its own military industrial complex, the United States retains insufficient funds to compete with the goodwill generated by the flood of Chinese trade and investment into Africa. America has adopted the wrong strategy when it comes to the long-term exercise of influence over African hearts and minds.

Latin America. The one area in Latin America where Obama can be completely content with his outcomes must be Cuba. The old guard of the CIA, who smarted from the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco of their own creation, have passed on and the succeeding generations of the wealthy elites, who fled Cuba and settled in Florida on Castro’s overthrow of the Batista government in 1959, have now successfully integrated. Thus Obama has been allowed to act and start the process of reintegrating Cuba into the American economy. From the point of view of the American economy and tourists, this will be a good thing; from the point of view of the Cuban people, history will be the judge.

After Middle Eastern distractions diverted US eyes from Latin American affairs for so long under Obama, the State Department’s and the CIA’s baleful gaze has once again turned back to America’s backyard in which popular governments and people-power were starting to run amok. It would appear that these trends, where most apparent, have now successfully been reversed. The tide is again flowing in the direction of Wall Street in Colombia, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. On the whole, it would appear that Latin America could be rated as a success story for America’s own and short-term view of its national interest — and a pretty dramatic failure for the vast majority of the people of Latin America.

Obama’s successes

It would be wrong to write off Obama’s term as one of total failure in regard to the relations between the United States and the rest of the world. In the face of enormous domestic resistance, Obama has scored three major victories for humanity.

First, he has saved the world from the major war with Iran, which previous US administrations had been working towards.

Second, though unable to reverse out of the Bush era war on terrorism, Obama nevertheless managed to persuade the Pentagon to accept the sop of a drone warfare counter-terrorism strategy as an alternative to massed boots on the ground. Thereby, Obama, at the cost of relatively few, may well have saved millions of lives.

Third, Obama will be remembered for having gone, like Nixon, to China. Without the agreement he came to with President Xi, humanity would have had no chance whatsoever of escaping the climate change trap it has wandered into.11

Prior to the November presidential election, a friend had commented that no matter what the outcome, there would be reason to rejoice that the other had not taken office. That attitude might have been unduly pessimistic.

New start

America needs a new start — such as it might just be getting under the new president. In previous elections, come each presidential change-over, the world has had little reason to expect anything other than more of the same old, same old — or even worse. Now, the status quo is most definitely under threat. At least President Trump, in contrast to his rival Hillary Clinton, has had nothing to do with the foreign policy failures detailed above.

Rapprochement with Russia and an end to the Syrian Civil War could be on the cards; so, too, could hostilities with China, a major falling out with the United Nations and the destruction of the Paris climate accord. Understandably, both the Republican and the Democrat establishments and much of the rest of the world are viewing Trump’s presidency with alarm.

If he is allowed to stay in power long enough to influence American policy, all will no doubt become apparent. One is reminded of the ancient Chinese curse ‘May you live in interesting times.’

NOTES

2. fpif.org/obamas-nuclear-paradox/.
In 1798, with the world’s population hovering at around one billion, English political economist Thomas Malthus wrote a fateful essay. Entitled An Essay on the Principle of Population, it argued that humanity faced a grim future unless we put in place measures to control our population. His logic was simple: if left unchecked, the human population would grow far faster than our food production, leading to misery, famine and war. The methods Malthus proposed to control the world’s population were equally simple: poor people should delay marriage and remain celibate until they married; and governments should roll back programmes to support the poor, lest they incentivise the poor to have more children.

Over 200 years later, with the world’s population sitting at between seven and eight billion, Malthus’s voice has found a modern echo in Joel Bourne’s End of Plenty: The Race to Feed a Crowded World. The language and the research methods have been updated, but the argument is pretty much the same: there are too many people on this planet, and it is the world’s poor who should bear the burden of changing that.

Bourne is well meaning and thorough. His writing comes up to greet you and take you on a vivid journey across the globe. As a National Geographic journalist, he has interviewed farmers, food scientists, activists, professors and policy-makers. The people you meet on End of Plenty’s pages — from agriculturalists to aquafarmers, and from investors to philanthropists — are interesting and interested, engaged and engaging. Bourne is an author who has travelled the world, spent time with farmers and on the land he writes about, and done a good job of analysing issues around food politics and production.

However, his laudable efforts to outline the world’s food production problems do little to mask the fact that his prescriptions are as simplistic and misguided as Malthus’s conclusions in the late 18th century.

The End of Plenty is rightly based on the premise that the agricultural revolution(s) of the 1980s and even 1990s are coming to an end, just as the consuming patterns of the developing countries in the south combined with already high consumption of the north require more food for fuel and fodder, placing strain on the Earth’s resources and climate. But his solution to this troubling pattern is not (for example) to suggest concrete ways to reduce consumption. Rather, he suggests that the world’s population growth needs to be controlled, particularly in large developing countries. He does not provide any analysis of the reasons for high fertility rates in these places. However, he judges that population control is the premier solution to the world’s claimed impending agricultural crisis.

In pursuing his Malthusian argument, Bourne makes some strange leaps of logic. His detailed analysis of India’s Bengal famine in the 1940s is unconvincing. He seeks to argue that it was a lack of food production that created the famine, and rebut Amartya Sen’s position that it was political forces that deepened the crisis. But, as he acknowledges, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill did not send food to the famine-ridden Indian colony. The problem during the Bengal famine, as now, was not that the world does not have enough food to feed humanity; it was that the world’s food is poorly distributed and unevenly consumed.

Bourne does have some interesting observations to make. He rightly takes aim at financiers who speculate on the future prices of basic food commodities as well as at the gas-guzzling culture of the United States and other industrialised economies. He outlines some interesting potential methods for increasing global food production, such as better harvesting of the world’s oceans and lakes; expanding organic agriculture; and ‘reclaiming’ previously over-utilised land. Perhaps the most valuable point that the book makes is that the world does not have infinite resources. Over-cultivation of land combined with burgeoning consuming middle classes throughout the developing world mean that we face genuine environmental constraints.

But Bourne’s solution to this problem is classic Malthus: rather than a reallocation of resources and/or a global level cultural shift in our consumption patterns, his primary prescription is that we must control the world’s population. At one point he writes: ‘Of course, the most beneficial thing humanity could do is to show more restraint in the bedroom.’ In other places, you hear this argument repeated: ‘There can be no permanent progress in the battle against hunger until the agencies that fight for increased food production and that fight for population control unite in a common effort’, making some of his promising prescriptions about lower consumption appear as secondary measures.

Bourne glosses over the very ugly place that the ideology of population control has led us in the 19th and 20th centuries: to
the problematic projects of eugenics, mass sterilisations and indiscriminate contraceptive methods that have led to loss of dignity and life for millions of women. Above all, the ideology of population control creates a society that blames the poor and the marginalised for over-reproducing. Indeed, the highly problematic ‘population bomb’ metaphor has led to dehumanised global policy supported by rich governments, wealthy misguided philanthropists, foundations and non-governmental organisations, and also international aid agencies. Yet if the world cannot change its consumption patterns (for example, by eating less meat and investing in public transportation systems) and if the consuming classes want to continue to deny the impact of our actions, it seems morally problematic to pass the burden of the world’s resource problems onto the poor.

History tells us that populations stabilise with work from the bottom up (through, for example, educational, political and social empowerment of women), not top-down population control measures. Indeed, experience tells us that population policy frameworks have proved draconian and detrimental to long-term gains for demographic and reproductive rights.

Having come from a farming family in India, with grandparents who thought food should come from the land not the supermarket, I appreciate Bourne’s love of the land and the people who live off it. However, I worry that he fails to see how problematic it is to advance an ideological framework that places the burden of solving humanity’s problems on the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people.

NAYANTARA SHEORAN APPLLETON

CONFLICT IN MYANMAR: War, Politics, Religion

Editors: Nick Cheesman and Nicholas Farrelly

POWER SHARING IN A DIVIDED NATION: Mediated Communalism and New Politics in Six Decades of Malaysia’s Elections

Author: Johan Saravanamuttu

Two current offerings from Singapore’s Institute of Southeast Asian Studies provide insight into substantive political developments in two ASEAN countries.

The first is an edited volume based on the 2015 Myanmar/Burma Update Conference (at the Australian National University), described as the most significant gathering since the series began in 1999. It is not hard to see why — Myanmar has been engaged in a political and economic transformation, while attempting to deal with a complex patchwork of ethnic conflict. Elections in 2015 were, in the words, of this book, ‘a historic achievement’. They saw Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) take a majority in parliament, and Suu Kyi formed a government in partnership with elements (mainly military) from the previous regime. Suu Kyi (formally now as state counsellor and NLD leader) is a figure of some international fame and great expectations sit upon the new government.

Clearly the people of Myanmar have signalled a desire for wholesale change. Suu Kyi’s/NLD’s sweep of the country’s constituencies was a landslide everywhere except Rakhine and Shan states. Rakhine, which features considerable majority Buddhist Rakhine and minority Muslim tension, opted for an ethnic based political vehicle reflecting majoritarian concerns. A number of contributions in this volume focus on problem of Rakhine’s communal violence, and the problem of the Muslim population (Rohingya) flowing over the border into Bangladesh. Suu Kyi is caught between the ethnic Rakhine perception that the NLD has sided with the Muslim community and the accusations of some in the international press that she has not done enough. Meanwhile hardline Buddhist ginger groups (particularly MaBaTha) have emerged to express their criticism of any signs of inclusion and tolerance. Conflict in Myanmar notes a long-term issue around perceptions of Islam, foreign and domestic.

Conflict in Myanmar contains some excellent contributions on elections/politics and on the Rohingya question. There are a small number of uneven chapters, including a hard-to-follow account that compares (but does not contrast) Islamophobia in Myanmar to that of the United States. What is less canvassed in this volume is the monumental economic challenge in front of Myanmar. Then there is a question that has bedevilled Myanmar from its very beginning — ethnic reconciliation. There are references to Myanmar’s ethnic question here and there, and Ricky Yue offers an excellent chapter on the complexities of southern Shan, but there is no single chapter that outlines the attempt to coalesce a peace process between the central government and sixteen major armed groups. In summary, this volume is an excellent step forward, but future versions could benefit from a wider introductory survey of all the pillars of Myanmar’s transition.

Turning to Malaysia, Johan Saravanamuttu’s volume, Power Sharing in a Divided Nation, is an extensive look at the course of Malaysian politics in the post-independence era. Saravanamuttu describes a polity that has, in recent years, entered into a state of greater flux, both for the ruling coalition and the opposition parties. In 2013 the ruling coalition’s vote share slumped to 47 per cent — thereby technically losing the overall popular vote for the
first time, although still able to form a government under first past the post arrangements. This has translated into increasing domestic restiveness, in part driven by former prime minister Mahathir (and various other figures from the government party, UMNO) coming out in open opposition to Prime Minister Najib. Saravanamuttu also notes the increasing difficulties for the various opposition parties at the same time, particularly given the (re)imprisonment of Anwar Ibrahim as perhaps the most well-known opposition figure. As the sub-title of the book suggests, the thesis here is that while ethnic politics persist in Malaysia, this is ‘mediated’ to some degree by a series of political bargains. One point raised by this book that will be debated is the role of Islam in political life. Saravanamuttu notes that while both UMNO and the Islamist opposition PAS have competed for the votes of the Islamic constituency, these political vehicles have fared better in elections when they have softened their tone and reached back towards the middle of the political spectrum. Nonetheless, Malaysian political leaders have continued to make public overtures towards political Islam, including a very recent debate on hudud punishments that currently sits before parliament. But as this volume is indicating, appealing within and across Malaysia’s diverse communities is a very delicate balance.

ANTHONY SMITH

HELEN CLARK: Inside Stories

Compiled by: Claudia Pond Eyley and Dan Salmon

Helen Clark: Inside Stories started life as the 2013 MediaWorks documentary, Helen, made by documentarians Claudia Pond Eyley and Dan Salmon. The book is a compilation of the transcripts of interviews conducted with politicians, family members, political commentators and Helen Clark herself. These are arranged (mostly) chronologically, and with each chapter covering a certain period in time, event or theme.

The transcriptions are presented wholly without political comment or historical analysis, aside from a small introduction at the beginning of each chapter. For the reader, this structure and style lends itself to dropping in and out of the book as the strictures of life permit, or to making a beeline for a chapter that is of particular interest before lights-out in the evening. For the time-poor personer, this may make for the ideal non-fiction read; for the reader interested before lights-out in the evening. For the time-poor personer, this may make for the ideal non-fiction read; for the reader interested in a political biography and Helen Clark herself. These are arranged (mostly) chronologically, and with each chapter covering a certain period in time, event or theme.

The book is full-to-overfilling with the revealing reflections of key players in some of the biggest upheavals in our modern political history. Indeed, one of the most fascinating sections — for this reader, at least — is the chapter that focuses on the Labour government of 1987 to 1990. The observations of various insiders present during the breakdown of the social contract are both revealing and informative. Economic regulations had been removed, New Zealanders were making money out of money and it seemed as if the sun would never set on the boom. But set it did — predictably, and in spectacular fashion. Former Deputy Prime Minister Jim Anderton recalls the ‘huge inflationary spike…

when people committed suicide on their farms in huge numbers… there was a cost all right, but it wasn’t to the people who were making the money’. Very much to Clark’s credit, as minister of housing she protected the country’s state housing stock from the machinations of Finance Minister Roger Douglas, because ‘affordable housing, secure tenancies, [and] the role of the Housing Corporation (as it was) were very important to me’. Clark felt that ‘there were two ways of reacting… one was to do what Jim [Anderton] did’, the other to stick around and act as a ‘voice from within’. Anderton left the party to form New Labour; Clark remained with old Labour, and the rest is history.

Another revealing, and very topical section of the book covers Helen Clark’s sometimes fractious relationship with an oft-misogynistic media establishment. The veteran broadcaster Brian Edwards discusses the ‘extraordinary amount of sexism’ that Clark had to endure on a regular basis: ‘she was accused of being a lesbian… jokes were made about her voice, her hair, the way she dressed, you name it’. Interestingly, Edwards asserts that Clark was admired by the public, whereas ‘John Key is liked. I’m not saying that Helen wasn’t… but the population at large admired her, in probably the same sort of way they might have admired Margaret Thatcher. They admired her intellect in particular.’

A friend intimated to me that Helen Clark: Inside Stories might appeal only to political hacks who watch Parliament TV for recreation, and who ‘live within a five kilometre radius of the Thorndon New World’. I think that assessment does this book a disservice. Granted, it does not have the popular history appeal of David Kynaston’s work on post-war Britain or the down-to-earth readability of a Barry Gustafson political biography, but it does contain the (relatively) unmediated thoughts and reflections of many people at the coalface of the Clark government, and for that reason alone it is compelling. It is rather a quiet book, but it is certainly one worth checking out.

DAN BARTLETT

CHINA AND THE PACIFIC: The View from Oceania

Editor: Michael Powles
Published by: Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2016, 248pp, $40.

Over the past twenty years, China’s diplomatic and economic outreach into the Pacific has evolved from providing financial and infrastructural aid to a much broader strategic pronouncement of influence that encompasses geopolitical, commercial, cultural and military aspirations. Much of the existing scholarship and assessments concerning these developments have previously revolved around a somewhat alarmist narrative, peppered with suspicions
over the motivations behind China's growing presence in the region — whether it be rivalry with Taiwan for official recognition, a post-Cold War struggle with the United States as the pre-eminent power in the Asia-Pacific region or as a key pillar of its long-term maritime navigation, defence and security strategy.

Over the last decade or two Beijing's push into the region has been accompanied by waves of new migrants, who carry with them distinct value and behavioural sets that have raised concerns and tensions with local populations and authorities — quite a different story to the long history of well-established ethnic Chinese sojourners who had settled, intermarried and integrated into the Pacific social fabric since the early 1900s.

*China and the Pacific: The View from Oceania* is the product of a conference convened in late February 2015 at the National University of Samoa, drawing together contributions from more than 40 international academics, diplomats, politicians, experts and officials to address these issues in a very inclusive environment. In addition to Chinese and regional discussants, Pacific voices were given the limelight, ensuring that their messages and viewpoints were clearly conveyed to Beijing, Canberra and Wellington.

The resulting publication is a comprehensive compilation of presentations (with themes ranging from geopolitics, security, development co-operation, trade and investment to the Chinese diaspora) analysing the benefits and challenges of accommodating and managing China's presence in Oceania, and identifying areas for further policy development and implementation.

Right from the outset this book actively steers the topic away from the threat discourse towards a more positive tone of engagement. While there are real concerns and caution about China's role, it is nevertheless potentially constructive. After all, in the eyes of Pacific Islands leaders, there is no alternative but to adapt to China's rise. There are repeated references to 'feeding, taming, and riding the dragon' under a process of regional agency bolstered with a sense of increased confidence and assertiveness.

Sensitive topics are carefully navigated. While snippets about localised crime and corruption can be found scattered amongst a few of the papers, there are hardly any references to the wider regional concern of transnational crime. Embarrassing issues (such as the drug smuggling and passport fraud issues highlighted in Brian Ensor and Tony Wall's recent set of newspaper articles 'Corruption in Paradise') appear to have been avoided altogether. Similarly, diplomatic rivalry with Taiwan receives only brief mention.

Where once China was viewed by traditional benefactors as a 'pariah donor', analysis by John Overton (professor at the School of Geography at Victoria University of Wellington) of the effectiveness of development aid since 2000 has shown that this is no longer the case. China has become more flexible in working with others. Multilateral and regional co-operation on triangular and tripartite development work in Papua New Guinea and East Timor and the Cook Islands Te Mato Vai Project are specific case studies. The One Belt One Road initiative (for building capacity and economic infrastructure, transport and communication links) is another example of south–south co-operation. The key, however, is ensuring effective governance of such programmes — an area requiring more attention amongst stakeholders.

China's hope to be more responsible in this respect, and to act in line with international expectations, is articulated by Wang Xuedong (deputy director at the National Centre for Oceania Studies at Sun Yat-sen University): in responding to some of these concerns around China's foreign assistance and resource diplomacy, he calls for patience and for countries such as New Zealand to encourage China to be more transparent.

Such input from Chinese contributors is very helpful in understanding China's intentions. Their views balance and explain the situation at hand. Their participation at the conference also illustrates how Beijing has committed more resources to research on the region as part of its determination to better engage with the Pacific, which previously attracted only a peripheral interest. As such, Yu Changsen (executive director at the National Centre for Oceania Studies at Sun Yat-sen University), succinctly illustrates China's policy shifts in the region, citing defence, security, navigational and geopolitical ambitions; these objectives have evolved into 'strategic partnership relationships' that are not so much a zero-sum game, but to be managed as 'strategic cooperation'. Yu concludes that the Pacific Islands deserve a review as part of China's master blueprint for its global re-emergence.

As another example of China's wider influence across the region, Liu Shusen (deputy dean at the Centre for Oceanian Studies at Peking University) highlights its soft power rebalancing through increased people-to-people links, such as Chinese scholarships for student exchange and capacity-building. This is happening at higher levels as well — for example, Beijing offers officer training for the military, and workshops for government officials.

Another soft power component of China's outreach is through its overseas diaspora. Scholarship about Chinese in the Pacific is mostly limited to local histories, so seeing more contemporary literature in an international relations context is particularly welcome. Regional contributors recount the interactions between different groups of ethnic Chinese with local communities, and explain the frustrations, distrust and ill-feeling that have manifested over a period of rapid societal transformation. Graeme Smith (research fellow at the School of International Political and Strategic Studies at the Australian National University) identifies drivers for recent people movements, and points out the Chinese central and provincial governments' general positions. Unlike other parts of the wider discussion, however, this section is largely absent of any Chinese input, which would have provided a useful lens to view the bigger picture.

These observations review only a few underlying aspects arising from the three-day conference. Overall, the organisers and editor have successfully woven a multitude of perspectives into a coherent and illuminating record. *China and the Pacific* is a valuable resource for anyone seeking a nuanced understanding of what is happening in the region at every level. The proceedings set a new benchmark for multilateral dialogue on activity in a region that is central to our common future.

JAMES TO
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