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Promoting the New Zealand brand

Murray McCully reflects on his eight-and-a-half-year stint as New Zealand’s foreign minister.

In May I tendered my resignation as New Zealand’s minister of foreign affairs, having served in this capacity for nearly eight-and-a-half years. At the outset, I want to acknowledge — and I have said this many times to my staff and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade — that the real foreign minister is always the prime minister. An effective prime minister/foreign minister team needs to present a seamless face to both the outside world, and to the New Zealand public. I have had the privilege of enjoying a highly successful eight-year partnership with John Key and would like to place on record my appreciation of his quite extraordinary leadership and management style. I have every confidence that Prime Minister English — and my successor Gerry Brownlee — will take the opportunity to build strongly on the platform that we have established.

It has been, in my view, a defining period in New Zealand foreign policy. In this article, I will provide my perspective on it — not in the nature of a comprehensive tour of the foreign policy waterfront, but rather a few strategic reflections on my term in office. I started in this role eight years ago with the intention of minimising my international travel, and operating as much as possible from home. That did not work out so well. I very quickly learned that the official visit and the formal meeting are the essential currency of international relations. So for a New Zealand foreign minister that means becoming accustomed to the demands of constant long distance travel, and the challenges associated with conducting many important meetings and media interviews through that fog of jet-lag that makes your brain work half a second behind your mouth. In return, I have acquired many friendships, a huge amount of phone numbers and email addresses, and the ability to be both more effective and more efficient as a consequence. I will strongly recommend that my successor follows a similar path.

In Opposition before I became foreign minister, in both policy documents and speeches, I said that a National-led government would run an independent foreign policy — that we would not seek to join or re-join alliances, and that we would bring an independent New Zealand perspective to foreign policy. I also said that, so far as possible, we would strive for bipartisanship in formulating our foreign affairs and trade policies — that as a small country with large international interests, New Zealand could not afford to have its key positions and relationships change according to the vagaries of the domestic political cycle.

New Zealand foreign policy needs to be conducted in decades, and not in three-year political cycles. So, during my term as foreign minister, I have deliberately sought to ensure that the settings we have established would stand the test of time — that there would be no great need or incentive for successors to seek major policy change. I have sought to respect and enhance the equities created by my predecessors and hope that my successors might do the same.

Underpinning principles

When asked to identify the principles that underpin New Zealand’s foreign policy, most fall back on democracy, the rule of law and human rights — and that is undoubtedly true. But if we relied upon those principles alone, New Zealand would be indistinguishable from many of our Western friends. So what are the additional values that New Zealand features which make us
our objective of creating a full, mutually respectful relationship ANZUS alliance.

security relationship with the United States, but outside of the relationship with the United States and to build a new type of spokesman we declared our intention to retain the anti-nuclear ambiguous, on this question. During my time as Opposition time the National Party had been uncertain, or intentionally any notion of an independent foreign policy. For quite some legislation, our relationship with the United States and our sta-

Back in 2008, the question of New Zealand’s anti-nuclear leg-

First, I would say that New Zealand’s style is to be respectful of other nations and their differences. I have found that when you are as small as we are, being respectful is a fairly useful default setting in conducting foreign relations.

Second, in pursuing principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, we try to be constructive and ask ourselves whether others who might be the focus of critical scrutiny need a lecture, or need some help. The New Zealand way should always be to offer help where it will be genuinely accepted. Megaphone diplomacy is not, in my view, New Zealand’s natural style — and nor should it be. In my time as foreign minister, I always asked whether our proposed actions would make us part of the solution or part of the problem.

Third, I believe the New Zealand approach is to be strongly protective of the space for small nations in multilateral affairs. Indeed, that is our rationale for investing in the multilateral system. I have said before, with apologies to Winston Churchill, that multilateralism is the worst basis for the conduct of international affairs — apart from all the others. In spite of their huge shortcomings New Zealand invests in multilateral processes and institutions because we understand that if we are to live in a world where the big guys always win and the small guys always lose, that is very bad news for us. And finally, I believe that our positions and perspectives should always show a keen sense of the interests and needs of our Pacific neighbourhood. That is surely an important responsibility and one that gives us greater credibility in international affairs.

Key elements
Back in 2008, the question of New Zealand’s anti-nuclear legislation, our relationship with the United States and our status in relation to the ANZUS alliance lay at the very heart of any notion of an independent foreign policy. For quite some time the National Party had been uncertain, or intentionally ambiguous, on this question. During my time as Opposition spokesman we declared our intention to retain the anti-nuclear legislation, to focus on rebuilding trust and confidence in the relationship with the United States and to build a new type of security relationship with the United States, but outside of the ANZUS alliance.

Today, I think I can say that we have substantially achieved our objective of creating a full, mutually respectful relationship with the United States, involving co-operation in virtually every sphere, now including, after a 30-year hiatus, two US ship visits in recent months. Importantly, we have achieved this in a way that has carried overwhelming public support, and which will likely see future governments build upon the base that has been created, rather than seeking further policy change. Similarly, we have commenced our relationship with the new Trump administration seeking to consolidate the significant advances in the relationship in recent years — with the obvious exception of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

So, having charted this course with the United States, what are the other features of an independent foreign policy for New Zealand? Of course, our closest and most complete relationship remains with our neighbour Australia. So close, in fact, that it is not really a foreign policy relationship. In an era in which every member of our Cabinet has their Australian counterparts’ cell-phone number, and in which prime ministers, without reference to their foreign ministries, arrange sleepovers at each other’s houses, the notion that the relationship can somehow be captured by clunky TPN’s or cable exchanges is simply fanciful.

While our two countries are so similar in outlook and history, there are some respects in which our foreign policy settings and international personalities are quite different, and we respect and welcome that. For a start, Australia is a formal ally of the United States. And Australia is a middle or G20 power with interests to match, and New Zealand is a smaller niche actor with a tighter focus on our own region. So while our unique relationship sees New Zealand and Australia naturally align almost all the time, we should never get bent out of shape over the issues on which we do not see eye-to-eye.

First priority
It was a cornerstone policy in our election platform that this government would make trade and economic objectives our number one priority. The key feature of the past decade has been the rise of China, in terms of both our bilateral relationship and as a regional and global power. In my eight and a half years as foreign minister I saw our exports to China increase from around $2 billion to nearly $10 billion, and visitor numbers more than quadruple from under 100,000 to over 400,000.

Had it not been for the dramatic expansion of trade and economic relations with China in the early years of the Key government, New Zealand would have suffered a long and sustained recession, and all of the associated social challenges that we have seen in some European nations. Managing this complex, intense, and dynamic relationship has been a key preoccupation during my tenure as foreign minister, as it will be for my successor. Today, our two-way trade is in excess of $23 billion, about the same as our trade with Australia, traditionally our largest trading partner.

The very successful visit by Premier Li Keqiang in late March has set the scene for a new chapter in which China will overwhelmingly become New Zealand’s biggest trade
and economic partner. We are currently investing nearly $50 million in a new embassy in Beijing. This scale of commitment is required across both public and private sector agencies if we are to maintain our equilibrium during a time of such dramatic growth.

I do want to address directly the notion that seems to attract coverage on slow news days that somehow New Zealand will at times need to choose between its relationship with the United States and its relationship with China. That belief shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of both relationships. It also runs directly counter to the whole notion of an independent foreign policy. We will, and do, agree and disagree with both the United States and China according to our own sense of what is right, and what is in New Zealand’s interests.

Major challenge
In light of the dramatic growth in trade and economic relations with China, a major challenge for New Zealand is to ensure that we maintain a balanced portfolio of trade relationships by achieving similar success in other markets. No business, or country, should ever be too exposed to one customer. A major focus of our work in the trade sphere in recent years has been the European Union, and more recently a post-Brexit United Kingdom.

The EU process was a challenging, and for a while frustrating, endeavour. Given that we share a significant heritage, expose the same principles, and work so naturally together, it was looking increasingly strange that New Zealand was on a dwindling list of nations with no pathway towards a free trade agreement with the European Union. The last few years have seen very considerable progress on that front and I left office comfortable that we are on track to achieve the architecture that will ensure our future trade and economic relations with the European Union match the high quality of the rest of this relationship.

Along the way, of course, we have seen the decision from the United Kingdom to exit the European Union. Given our very close historic and current ties with the United Kingdom, we have been ensuring that New Zealand is well placed to conclude a trade and economic relationship, while being respectful of the space the United Kingdom and the European Union will need to complete their own arrangements.

In relation to ASEAN we have good trade architecture in place and good bilateral relations with ASEAN members and are committed participants in the regional security dialogues brokered by ASEAN. But we are only just starting to achieve the trade and economic potential in this relationship. Significantly strengthening our ASEAN relationships was a major priority for me, and will be, I hope, for my successor.

Goal sighted
After a significant delay, a great deal of work, and a few political cuts and scratches, we now have the conclusion of the Gulf States free trade agreement in close sight. I say that having visited most and talked to all states in the GCC earlier this year. Already an important market for New Zealand, the GCC has all of the ingredients to become a huge partner for New Zealand in its own right — as well as providing a gateway to the wider Middle East and the vast potential of Africa. Over time, this will become critically important to our future as a significant world player in agriculture.

Latin America, where we are in the process of expanding our embassy network, presents significant opportunities for improved trading arrangements, initially amongst Pacific Alliance nations but also more widely. We have already seen significant growth in key exports as the Korean free trade agreement gains traction. The Japanese market remains a major and longstanding one for New Zealand, and given the overall importance of this relationship we will be trying to find the best way forward following the US withdrawal from the TPP. On the TPP, all I can say is that I am very confident that the Asia-Pacific region understands well the benefits of increased integration, free trade and regional cooperation and that we will keep finding ways of unlocking those benefits one way or another.

The unquestioned highlight of my time as foreign minister was New Zealand’s election to and service on the United Nations Security Council. A Security Council election is unlike anything else in the foreign policy business. One of the great skill sets of the foreign ministry is an ability to record every meeting or exchange as an outstanding win for New Zealand diplomacy. Unfortunately with a Security Council election, the numbers go up on a board in New York. And the numbers do not lie.

Prime Minister John Key said to me at the time that securing the support of three-quarters of the countries in the United Nations was like winning the world cup in diplomacy. It felt a bit like that at the time, but only very briefly, because serving a two-year term on the council provides a huge window on the terrible imperfections of the multilateral world.

Strong commitment
New Zealand was elected to the Security Council strongly committed to UN reform, and we left the council even more strongly committed to it. Rather than being overcome by frustration while on the council we did try to play a constructive role, we did listen to the views of all parties, we were hugely active and energetic, we did call it as we saw it when this needed to be done, and we did annoy most of our friends at one time or another. Whatever other criticisms anyone might make, I do not think anyone has accused us of just going along for the ride.

I have made the point before that the UN system is seriously broken: our capacity to create human suffering through conflict now greatly exceeds our capacity to either prevent or resolve that conflict, or to pay for its consequences. The international community now spends 80 per cent of humanitarian funding on support for victims of violent conflict, victims of man-made humanitarian tragedy, which was over US$19 billion in 2016. That compares with about US$4 billion for humanitarian need caused by natural disasters.

The UN system last year spent about US$9 billion on peacekeeping operations, some in quite hopeless situations. Yet a fraction of these amounts was invested in prevention of potential or emerging conflicts, much of it raised through voluntary contributions. Donor fatigue is now the overwhelming feature of special pledging events. The United Nations can no longer afford the consequences of its inability to prevent or resolve conflict.

There is little doubt that the use of, or threat to use, the veto in the Security Council is a huge contributing factor to the current state of affairs, which for most of our tenure bore a striking resemblance to the Cold War era. None of the permanent members should be proud of that. And nor should the UN membership put up with it.

I noted above that during our two years on the council we managed at some stage to annoy pretty much all of our friends.
If we left anyone out, then we managed to rectify that in the Nuclear Suppliers Group or some other multilateral organisation. It would be counter-productive for me, even at this stage, to provide a comprehensive list of these occasions. But it would be very remiss of me not to record my appreciation of the quite extraordinary cover that I received from Prime Minister Key to maintain a consistent New Zealand line on matters of importance to our values and brand, sometimes in the face of personal calls to him from the leaders of the largest and most powerful countries in the world.

**Pacific responsibilities**

One of the most important commitments we made prior to being elected was to focus strongly on New Zealand’s responsibilities in the Pacific. While I left office without achieving everything I would have liked to achieve in this respect, I can look back on a period of significant progress. With New Zealand’s support, the Pacific has made enormous progress in its tuna fishery — the region’s single greatest economic asset. What is the point of all of the other initiatives we fund if the region’s US$3 billion a year tuna fishery is yielding only a small percentage of its value to its owners, and when sustainable management practices are critical to avoid it going the way of other tuna fisheries on the planet. While there is plenty of work ahead of us, I am now confident we have turned the corner in that debate — thanks in large part to the work of Ambassador Shane Jones and New Zealand officials.

We have also made huge progress towards shifting Pacific Islands from the fossil fuel based electricity systems that were costing them on average 10 per cent of their GDPs, or one-third of their total import bills, to renewable energy. Using our convening capacity with the European Union and with other partners, we have now seen over $2 billion committed to renewable energy projects in the Pacific. That has seen quite dramatic progress in Polynesia, and is currently focused on electricity access in parts of Melanesia where 85 per cent of people have no electricity at all. These are truly game-changing developments for many of our Pacific neighbours.

We have always been clear that New Zealand will never have the biggest chequebook, which means we need to be prepared to focus on some of the more challenging projects. We need to take some risks. We need to take advantage of the nimble decision-making and quick delivery that our size makes possible. And we need to keep getting better at spending other people’s money.

It has never made any sense to me that New Zealand should simply try to deliver the same programmes as other countries. They, for the most part, have greater capacity and scale, while we have world-class expertise in areas like agriculture and renewable energy. We have tried to focus on these areas where we can really make a difference, including in relation to the scholarships program that makes up over 10 per cent of our total aid budget. Unashamedly, we have tried to focus on investments that will create sustainable economic growth and jobs. The huge turnaround in the fortunes of Niue, where tourism numbers have nearly trebled, and in the Cook Islands, where they have increased by 50 per cent, are shining examples.

**Global programmes**

While the Pacific consumes well over half of our development budget, we have also tried to re-shape our global programmes along the same lines, focusing heavily on agriculture and renewable energy in which New Zealand has a truly world-class offering. The lessons we have learnt in our own region have given us the capacity and the confidence to deliver high value, relatively low cost expertise in renewable energy in half a dozen Caribbean countries and some in Africa. And slowly improving our delivery of agricultural programmes not only provides many countries in the Pacific, South-east Asia and Africa with the support they most want from New Zealand, it also paves the way for our commercial agricultural interests to play the more active global role that this country will require in the future.

These shifts occurred as we restructured the development side of the ministry. The decision to bring our diplomatic and development roles under one roof, denounced as heresy and the actions of a barbarian seven years ago, is now the established international orthodoxy. The further step to full integration in the new Pacific and Development Group last year should set the scene for a further lift in performance. On behalf of the government I made clear that the ministry must do more than pay lip service to our role in the Pacific — we need to ensure the ministry is the best and most respected centre of Pacific expertise on the planet. We are not there yet, but I hope the goal and the building blocks towards it are now well established.

In the process we have become an acknowledged champion for the concerns of small island developing states, which number around 40 of the UN’s membership. We used our term on the Security Council to advance their interests. It is pleasing to see other countries contending for elected office now taking greater note both of the size of the small island developing states bloc and of the challenges they face.

**Unsurprising reaction**

Finally, a word of explanation: if on 2 May you heard the incessant popping of champagne corks at the headquarters of many of the world’s multilateral funding institutions, you should not have been surprised. These giant process-driven bureaucracies generally deliver a below-average quality of service to the poorer countries of the world, especially those in our region where compliance regimes designed for central Asian countries of 50 million people are a deal breaker for a country of 10,000 like Tuvalu. I plead guilty to having spent a good part of the last eight years persuading, cajoling, criticising, hectoring, and threatening to withhold budgets in order to try to achieve a more realistic, timely and effective service for our smaller neighbours.

It is my very firm observation, based on over eight years’ experience, that while a shortage of funding and resources might often be a problem, a much bigger problem is the ability of institutions to deploy the resources they have in a timely, efficient and effective fashion. I hope that my successors will continue New Zealand’s forceful advocacy and deep engagement in our Pacific region. Personally, I have found this simultaneously the most challenging and the most satisfying part of this role.

I believe that New Zealand has a great international brand, a proud history and a unique contribution to make to our region and to world affairs. I want to place on record my appreciation of the many talented and hardworking people at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so very ably led by Brook Barrington, who supported me over the past eight and a half years. It is one of life’s great privileges to serve as New Zealand’s minister of foreign affairs, charting our course during a defining period in our international relationships.
Switzerland and New Zealand share a common set of values and principles on the international stage. As global trading nations and beneficiaries of international peace and security, both our countries are committed to a fair, rules-based international system. Both also recognise the key role the United Nations plays in support of this.

Against this backdrop, some years ago New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully and his Swiss counterpart Didier Burkhalter discussed options to further enhance our co-operation on UN matters. At the time, New Zealand’s campaign for a seat on the fifteen-member UN Security Council was in full swing. Switzerland had also recently declared it was running for a seat a few years further down the track.

One concrete outcome of these discussions was the idea of a temporary deployment (or ‘secondment’) of a Swiss diplomat to the UN Security Council task force within New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Plans for the secondment were further discussed during Federal Councillor Burkhalter’s visit to New Zealand in October 2013, the first-ever official visit by a Swiss foreign minister to these shores, and quickly finalised once New Zealand was successfully elected to the Security Council in October 2014.

In international politics and diplomacy, vying for a term on the world’s top body in charge of maintaining international peace and security is no small feat by any standard. Both campaigning to get elected and servicing the two-year term as a member require careful, long-term planning. Security Council elections are often contested, and candidate countries need to secure the support of two-thirds of the 193 member states of the United Nations. While since the United Nations’ founding in 1945 five seats are permanently reserved for the victors of the Second World War (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), smaller countries such as ours could typically hope to secure one of the sought-after non-permanent seats only once every twenty years.

Unlike New Zealand, which has been a member of the Security Council four times since 1945, Switzerland if elected in 2022 will be joining the Security Council for the first time. (Switzerland only became a full member of the United Nations in 2002, making it the only country thus far to join the organisation by means of a direct democratic vote). The secondment, therefore, was an extremely useful opportunity for Switzerland to understand the mechanics and practical challenges of being a Security Council member in more detail. Insights and lessons learned on organisational and procedural aspects were of particular interest, as well as getting a sense of the scope for elected Security Council members effectively to influence council discussions and outcomes.

Switzerland’s approach to international affairs has much in common with New Zealand’s. Both countries share values and principles and strongly support the United Nations. But unlike New Zealand, a founding member, Switzerland is a relatively recent member of the world body, only joining in 2002. Aspiring to a term on the Security Council in future and keen to gain experience in council affairs, it was pleased to be able take part in an unusual arrangement agreed by the two countries’ foreign ministers. This involved embedding a Swiss diplomat in the MFAT team supporting New Zealand’s effort on the council.

Flavio Milan is a Swiss career diplomat born in Biel/Bienne. With degrees in history and international relations and work experience in research and education, UN affairs and trade policy, he joined the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 2002. Prior to taking up the role of deputy head of mission at the Swiss Embassy in Wellington in 2012, he served in various positions in Berne, Tanzania and Thailand. He is married and has two young daughters who have developed a distinct Kiwi accent, in addition to their German mother tongue and their father’s Bernese dialect.

Intensive experience

Having previously served as deputy head of mission at the Swiss Embassy in Wellington for two and a half years, it was a real privilege for me to join MFAT early in 2015. It has been an intensive and fast-paced experience ever since. The Security Council meets...
in New York almost on a daily basis, often on short notice, and covers all major conflicts of our time, including Syria, Yemen and South Sudan.

My role in the task force included developing New Zealand’s strategies and day-to-day co-ordination of issues on the council’s agenda, preparing ministerial briefings and supporting outreach to international and domestic partners. I was also involved in longer-term projects, including Security Council-related organisational and staffing aspects, as well as New Zealand-led work to improve the situation of civilians caught in the cross-fire of conflict in Syria and elsewhere.

My personal highlights were New Zealand’s month-long Security Council presidencies in July 2015 and September 2016, as well as a twenty-day relief assignment to New Zealand’s Permanent Mission in New York earlier last year. This included having the honour of representing New Zealand at working-level meetings of the Security Council. Sitting behind the ‘New Zealand’ name plate and taking the floor on its behalf was certainly something quite extraordinary for a Swiss! In another historic moment, I was able to attend closed Security Council consultations, which to the best of my knowledge would have been the first time ever for a Swiss diplomat.

When New Zealand’s term ended on 31 December 2016, my work on the Security Council task force focused on ensuring an enduring legacy of New Zealand’s achievements, and building on and expanding the enhanced relationships and institutional knowledge gained during the term.

**Slow progress**

Looking back over the past two years, progress on the Security Council often seemed frustratingly slow, which is a common feature of many multilateral institutions. Reflecting the current state of world affairs more generally, the Security Council’s effectiveness was often severely hampered by narrow national interests and zero-sum politics, as well as by the veto powers which permanent members were granted in 1945. Syria is undoubtedly the most glaring example of the council’s — and indeed the whole international community’s — failure effectively to address and end conflicts.

That said, the Security Council can and does have an impact when it is united and manages to work through the necessary compromises. This was exemplified by the council’s political backing and international legal endorsement of the Iran deal last year. On average, consensus is eventually found on around 90 per cent of council resolutions, which are the most formal, legally binding form of its decisions. The Security Council has also managed to set up a global response to outlaw and sanction terrorist groupings, ISIS and Al Qaeda in particular — work which has been successfully led by New Zealand over the past two years. Less in the spotlight but equally important is the role the council plays in overseeing the United Nations’ sixteen peacekeeping operations across the globe. While often far from perfect, these do contribute to saving lives on a daily basis in some of the worst conflicts of our times.

Despite its shortcomings, the Security Council is and remains the only permanent forum for discussion and decision-making with the mandate and global legitimacy to tackle today’s many complex security challenges. Having a voice of reason such as New Zealand’s on the council, with creative and practical ideas and no vested interests, is important and can make a difference in achieving the necessary compromises and reaching better outcomes.

**Key findings**

The insights I was able to gain from working in MFAT are consistent with key findings of the Swiss government’s recent report to Parliament on its bid for a seat on the Security Council. Council membership would offer Switzerland an additional platform for demonstrating its traditional and proven skills as an impartial bridge-builder and for putting them to good use on behalf of the international community, thereby advancing its own interests and values. The report also concludes that Switzerland’s ability fully to pursue its policy of neutrality — which is not an end in itself but an instrument of Switzerland’s foreign and security policies — would remain unchanged. Moreover, the report indicates that a seat on the Security Council would offer Switzerland better access to key states and enable it to expand its international network, which I can confirm has clearly been the case for New Zealand.

Allowing a Swiss diplomat to work as a fully integrated member within MFAT in this once-in-a-generation diplomatic endeavour is also a reflection of the strength of the bilateral relationship and mutual trust between our two countries. While there is currently no New Zealander embedded in the Swiss foreign service, perhaps a successful outcome of Switzerland’s campaign for a seat on the Security Council in 2023–24 might provide a perfect opportunity to reciprocate this valuable and inspiring opportunity.
A very complicated business

Ken Ross outlines the ‘horse-trading’ behind Alister McIntosh not becoming Commonwealth secretary-general in 1965.

‘…the appointment of a Commonwealth Secretary-General. As I mentioned, this is a very complicated business and it will very likely be the subject of much horse-trading.’ (Alister McIntosh, 1965)

Alister McIntosh is New Zealand’s outstanding diplomatic mandarin. After 23 years spent creating our foreign service ‘Mac’ retired in November 1966, when he reached the then compulsory retirement age for public servants of 60. We have not seen his like since. McIntosh deserves a major biography.

For now we rely mostly on Ian McGibbon, with his entry for McIntosh in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography and the two volumes he edited of McIntosh’s correspondence — Undiplomatic Dialogue: Letters Between Carl Berendsen and Alister McIntosh 1943–1952 (1993) and Unofficial Channels: Letters between Alister McIntosh and Foss Shanahan, George Laking and Frank Corner 1946–1966 (1999). McIntosh also features in the writings of Malcolm Templeton, Gerald Hensley, David McIntyre, Keith Sinclair, James McNeish, Roberto Rabel and Michael King.

McGibbon, McIntyre, King and McNeish all touch on an episode which they saw as bruising McIntosh’s reputation — his failure to be the first Commonwealth secretary-general in 1965, due to a seemingly threatened British veto hanging over him because his homosexuality was a security vulnerability too far for London to countenance. Joanna Woods, in Diplomatic Ladies (2013), states that ‘Holyoake had been obliged to withdraw his [McIntosh’s] nomination on security grounds’.

McIntosh’s homosexuality was made public in McGibbon’s account in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, and was later highlighted by Michael King in his Penguin History of New Zealand (2003). The richness of McIntosh’s family life, with wife Doris and son James, including their weekend garden retreat at Te Marua, is well captured by McIntosh in his correspondence and by Ngaio Marsh in her 234 letters to Doris that span the final two decades of McIntosh’s life.

Though McIntosh was indisputably homosexual, there is no evidence to support and a lot of evidence to counter the argument that it was his homosexuality which scuppered his chances of becoming the Commonwealth’s first secretary-general. A British push to ‘kill’ McIntosh’s bid was most likely derailed by the most senior of the British mandarins. Joe Garner, who led the British officials throughout this period, recounts in his memoir, with a most elliptic sentence, that it did not happen that way. Given his close friendship with Garner, McIntosh seemingly knew as much at the time. And McIntosh’s correspondence at the Alexander Turnbull Library gives us too many clues to allow the belief that McIntosh’s homosexuality cost him the secretary-general assignment to stand any longer.

To come to this conclusion, I have combined McIntosh’s reminiscences in his letters with some Holyoake material at Archives New Zealand, further informed by two David McIntyre articles that chart the time-line for the year-long process ahead of Arnold Smith’s appointment as secretary-general by Commonwealth leaders meeting in London on 23 June 1965.

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Long-serving Secretary of External Affairs Alister McIntosh played a significant role in the Canadian Arnold Smith becoming the first Commonwealth secretary-general in 1965. McIntosh skilfully out-maneuvered British officials, who sought to deny him and Smith the slot. McIntosh was himself a candidate for the position but accepted late in the piece that he was not to be the secretary-general. His, and his wife’s, health ruled him out of the move to London for such an arduous assignment. McIntosh’s moves to help Smith’s appointment were successful in large part because his prime minister, Keith Holyoake, was with him in rebuffing the British.
The foreign ministry's inventory of McIntosh's correspondence (the Turnbull's FMS-Papers-6759-2) is of considerable value but has a substantial shortcoming. There are many more letters in the Turnbull folders than the 5450 letters listed on the inventory with foreign ministry folio/piece numbers. ‘McIntosh… was an indefatigable correspondent, and in that context the master of calculated indiscretion’.2 He held this correspondence with colleagues, friends and contacts in his own secure ‘registry’ — a correspondence that would seldom have had copies in the ministry's official registry. George Laking, his successor as head of the foreign ministry, let us know that McIntosh’s correspondence when it becomes available for publication will provide an incisive commentary of a rare kind on the realities of political life in New Zealand over a quarter of a century.”

The essence of my rebuttal is that, first, McIntosh came to accept very late in the year-long search for the secretary-general that neither his nor his wife’s health could stand such a long assignment based in London. In fact, Tom Larkin, a close colleague, describes him as being ‘often ill and always tired’.3 Second, by then McIntosh and his prime minister, Keith Holyoake, saw the Canadian candidate as a good fit for the role. Third, while the British campaigned against ‘Mac’, they were not in a position to accept Arnold Smith because he is too much of a crusader. McIntosh told a colleague that the British from London pressuring Ottawa to put up a Canadian other than Smith McIntyre shows that the Canadian was subject to a campaign that neither his nor his wife’s health could stand such a long assignment based in London. In fact, Tom Larkin, a close colleague, describes him as being ‘often ill and always tired’.3 Second, by then McIntosh and his prime minister, Keith Holyoake, saw the Canadian candidate as a good fit for the role. Third, while the British campaigned against ‘Mac’, they were not in a position to veto him because of any security concern arising from his homosexuality.

So what did take place? Commonwealth senior officials met in London in early January 1965 and again in mid-June to prepare the way for leaders to create the Secretariat. There was a general expectation in the media and in Commonwealth circles that McIntosh and the Canadian Arnold Smith would be the two strong candidates for secretary-general — even though London and Canberra clearly did not want either. McIntosh’s leadership style was silkier than Smith’s, but both seemed set to make waves. Canberra clearly did not want either. McIntosh’s leadership style was silkier than Smith’s, but both seemed set to make waves. Third, while the British campaigned against ‘Mac’, they were not in a position to accept Arnold Smith because he is too much of a crusader.

McIntosh then exhibited masterful skill in an exercise for which it seems he had Holyoake’s co-operation, understanding and confidence. McIntosh wanted to make certain that if he was not going to secure the role then Smith would to ensure the new secretariat would be progressive and activist.

Holyoake’s formally nominating McIntosh made it clear that the New Zealand government acknowledged its nominee had the necessary security clearances. The officials’ work never included the rumoured British proposition that London must security vet the secretary-general. Instead, Commonwealth senior officials, who included McIntosh and Smith, had in January written in the provision that all Secretariat personnel, including the secretary-general, would have their clearances handled by their home governments; that terminology remained unchanged in the document presented to leaders in late June.13

But even prior to nominating, while intimating that he could not do the job justice, McIntosh was exhibiting his classic approach while in charge of his departments, explained by Gerald Hensley as he ‘always preferred to back into things, accompanying his moves with gloomy predictions of their likely failure’.14 Many of his numerous letters to colleagues and friends which touched on his thinking as it evolved from January to June — on how to play the secretary-general selection — exemplify Hensley’s observation.15 It seems only in the final days did McIntosh let go of his own ambition, accepting that Arnold Smith would be the secretary-general.

Once Smith was chosen, McIntosh explained to Hunter Wade, then the New Zealand high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur:

The main reason for my pulling out of the Secretariat job was deterioration in my hearing. I don’t know whether you recall my having trouble when I was up in South-east Asia with you people last year, but I had just had some sort of virus ‘flu'
which definitely left me very deaf. It was about its worst in that flight we had on an unpressurised plane from Penang. It defeated all attempts at alleviation or cure and the same specialist I saw in London last July told me this time that it was certainly worse and could get more so, and that there was nothing that could be done about it. This was the last straw as far as I was concerned and, not without considerable disappointment, I felt I had no alternative but to pull out. My main concern was to ensure that what support I might have got went to Arnold Smith since the British did not want either of us. The result was, happily, a walk-over.16

McIntosh added further detail to a long-time friend that the deafness ‘takes the form of a high pitched whine or buzz with the result that I am utterly useless in a crowded room or trying to listen to a conference’.17

Two developments not previously public that had occurred as McIntosh left London after the officials’ January meeting may well have spooked his self-assurance that he was fully fit to serve as secretary-general. To cope with his deafness he was trialling an experimental hearing aid, but he mislaid it. The story of its recovery is intriguing: once back in Wellington McIntosh contacted the Savoy Hotel thinking he had left it there. When the hotel’s management contacted him to say they had found it, he was told he had left it at another hotel (Grosvenor House). The second episode was McIntosh’s admission to both the governor-general and Air New Zealand’s chief executive of a serious security lapse that he committed when flying home from the meeting. Soon after arrival home, he acknowledged to them that when he departed London he had had 40 blank New Zealand passports in his checked baggage — as ‘safe-hand’ material the passports should have been with him in the cabin. (McIntosh also mentioned in the lost luggage was the governor-general’s gold watch that he had taken to London for repair.) The luggage got to Wellington late having gone via Rio de Janeiro.18 The two incidents likely drove home to McIntosh — was he prepared to do the extensive international travel envisaged for the new secretary-general?

So McIntosh played a long game: to stay in the ‘race’ as an insurance against Smith missing out. And despite growing health concerns, he represented New Zealand at the officials’ final preparatory meeting that began immediately prior to the leaders’ gathering. There were six nominations other than front-runners McIntosh and Smith. The other names were intended to block them. By the time McIntosh withdrew his candidacy the night before the officials met to recommend who was to be secretary-general, three others had already pulled their nominations. He had seen his London medical consultant, who gave him a note explaining the seriousness of his deafness; McIntosh urged his supporters to back Smith, whom he briefed. The next day Smith had his ‘walk-over’ victory: the three others still in the field including a last minute nomination — a British colonial official, Peter Stallard (put forward by Nigeria, where he had worked earlier in his career) — barely registered any support.

When Commonwealth leaders met in London from 17 to 26 June, establishing the Secretariat and appointing Smith took only a few minutes. Everyone was preoccupied with the Vietnam conflict and rebellion in Rhodesia. The leaders’ meeting was the first since Harold Wilson had become the British prime minister in October 1964: he devotes fourteen pages of his memoir, _The Labour Government 1964–1970: A Personal Record_ (1971), to his keeping the twenty leaders happy, while they considered the two big issues. He did not even mention establishing the Secretariat or appointing Smith.

**Thoroughly approved**

By 1965, McIntosh understood that the British... are dirty players when it suits them.19 But he was well known to the British espirocrats — such as heads of MI5, including Percy Sillitoe, Dick White and Roger Hollis — and it is unlikely his brothers in arms would have countenanced such an attack on one of their own. In early 1958 Frank Corner, then based in London, retailed to McIntosh a briefing from high in the British Foreign Office, which concluded that McIntosh was ‘thoroughly approved of, from the personal security viewpoint, by the U.K. authorities’.20 Though made seven years earlier than the selection of the Commonwealth secretary-general, the statement undoubtedly was made by the British in the knowledge of McIntosh’s homosexuality — even if Corner did not know.21

To them, McIntosh was the godfather to New Zealand establishing a security service in 1956. We have the then responsible minister (and later prime minister) John Marshall’s account of McIntosh’s leadership on this.22 Michael Parker, author of the only book on the New Zealand SIS, acknowledges that several of the early chapters of his book relied heavily on McIntosh.23 Brigadier Bill Gilbert, who headed the SIS from 1956 to 1976, worked closely with McIntosh throughout the decade prior to 1956. His regard for McIntosh’s integrity would have been known to ministers. Ombudsman Sir Guy Powles was another whose association with McIntosh spanned decades. Powles, Gilbert and others of that small Kiwi elite knew how to handle their security responsibilities. When talking with historians Fred Wood and Mary Boyd in late 1975, McIntosh reflected ‘we were the one country in the Commonwealth that never had a major scandal on this sort of thing’ — a telling insight to his capable handling of security considerations in the top echelons of the New Zealand public service for 23 years.

As for Holyoake himself, David McIntyre has written that ‘when and how Holyoake came to know about [McIntosh’s homosexuality] is not clear, nor is it clear whether he ever told McIntosh he had been told.’24 A separate article is needed on the six-year Holyoake–McIntosh working relationship. But it may be that Holyoake was unfazed by McIntosh’s homosexuality, and may have known of it well prior to 1965, possibly even prior to becoming prime minister again in December 1960. But for this story, it seems Holyoake relished letting McIntosh loose to push back at the British who were intent on blocking his bid to be secretary-general.

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17 © 1971, to his keeping the government 1964–1970: A Personal Record

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Three postscripts

With retirement approaching McIntosh secured himself a more leisurely assignment: he went to Rome as New Zealand’s first resident ambassador, 1967–70. The McIntoshes appear to have enjoyed their largely relaxing assignment there. Numerous friends, such as John Beaglehole and his wife, visited and Ngaio Marsh, their longstanding friend, stayed five weeks in 1968. She used her time there to commence crafting her crime novel When in Rome (1970), which she dedicated to ‘the Ambassador and Mrs McIntosh and the Staff of the Residence, New Zealand Embassy in Rome who made it possible’.25

On becoming prime minister, Norman Kirk turned to McIntosh for several major tasks. But first he gave him a knighthood — outside of the new procedures Kirk had established for such awards. Margaret Hayward tells us in her Diary of the Kirk Years (1981) that in April 1973 Kirk envisaged McIntosh ‘as an overseer of the SIS, someone accustomed to dealing with secret documents; a sort of ombudsman-guardian of civil rights’. Hayward has a second mention (on 22 June 1973, soon after McIntosh was knighted) of Kirk further pondering giving McIntosh the task. In the absence of Gilbert overseas, the service’s deputy director, John Maling, contacted the prime minister to say that ‘he has heard he is thinking of putting McIntosh in as an overseer of the SIS. And he says it won’t do’. Hayward records Kirk’s anger at Maling — this episode has the whiff of stoking old embers from the 1965 British offensive against McIntosh!

Nearly four decades later Don McKinnon took the brunt of another London-inspired ‘dirty politics’ episode: Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials reportedly set up Lakshman Kardigamar, a former Sri Lankan foreign minister, to displace the New Zealander when he sought a second term as secretary-general. Kardigamar badly misread his prospects: Tony Blair terminated the FCO officials’ manoeuvring and the Sri Lankan found Thabo Mbeki and Robert Mugabe were championing his bid. McKinnon was easily re-elected. He makes a glancing mention of the British role in his memoir.26

NOTES

1. McIntosh was writing to Jack Marshall, who though the deputy prime minister McIntosh addressed as an MP. (They had known each other since, at least, the Second World War.) Marshall had suggested a friend of his as a possibility for being the Commonwealth secretary-general. The letter, dated 10 February 1965, was in the period when Holyoake and McIntosh were working through the modalities of McIntosh’s nomination. Marshall was not in the know. MS-Papers-6759-406, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL).

2. W. David McIntyre, Background to the ANZUS Pact: Policy-Making, Strategy and Diplomacy, 1945–55 (Christchurch, 1995), pp.8–9, for his assessment of McIntosh’s importance in New Zealand joining ANZUS, and his chapter ‘Peter Fraser’s Commonwealth: New Zealand and the Origins of the New Commonwealth in the 1940s’, in New Zealand in World Affairs, Volume I: 1943–1957 (Wellington, 1977), pp.63–4, 87–8, which highlights McIntosh’s long association with Commonwealth affairs that was to be essential in 1965, when some British officials opposed his becoming the first secretary-general.


4. Ngaio Marsh first encountered the McIntoshes in 1959. From then their Wellington home became her ‘hotel’ when she was in town. Marsh’s 234 letters to Doris McIntosh are at the ATL (MS-Papers-1946). The letters give many insights on the McIntoshes.

5. The British vetting stratagem was likely generated by former Colonial officials fighting for their careers in the security service and the Colonial Office as Harold Wilson’s new government was cutting a swathe through London’s ‘Colonial’ enclaves in Whitehall — well described by Peter Wright in his Spy-catcher (1987), with the mid-1960s years heavily coloured by the atmospherics of Kim Philby, Anthony Blunt et al.


11. ATL, MS-Papers-6759-393 has his 23 February letter to Roger Peren.

12. Ibid., MS-Papers-6759-311.

13. Ibid., MS-Papers-6759-154 and MS-Papers-6759-155. The terminology was ‘all persons appointed to the staff of the Secretariat must be subject to clearance to the extent that their own governments raise no objection to their suitability for employment’.


15. ATL, MS-Papers-6759-393 and MS-Papers-6759-433 have these letters.

16. Ibid., MS-Papers-6759-363.

17. Ibid., MS-Papers-6759-406.

18. Ibid., MS-Papers-6759-406 and MS-Papers-6759-276.


21. John le Carré recently retailed his MI5 years (1956–59) in his memoir, The Pigeon Tunnel (2016), where he observed MI5’s double standards — ‘the Service seemed quite content to ignore the homosexuals in its own ranks’ while being ‘the moral arbiter of the private lives of Britain’s civil servants and scientists. Under vetting procedures of the day, homosexuals and other perceived deviants were held to be vulnerable to blackmail, and consequently debarred from secret work.’


In our world every generation believes, or likes to believe, that it exists at a time of great change. This mentality seems to be an integral part of human nature itself. Right now there are multiple layers of change reverberating around the world that challenge the role and potential of the UN system, and the international legitimacy that the United Nations embodies.

Democratic popular choices in the United States and in Europe throughout 2016, with more to come, are providing seismic shocks to the landscape of international relations. These occur in a global context where, in addition, the accomplishments of large newly emergent economies plus others are changing the world’s centre of economic and social gravity; and in the process affecting the international pecking order amongst leading nations.

This is a time, too, where technology and economics are shrinking the planet, where governments are no longer in control in quite the same ways as in the past, where non-government influence upon international relations is expanding (through single issue advocacy groups or powerful private enterprise) and radicalised violence employing the tactic of terrorism has achieved global reach.

There are, moreover, modern threats to security and well-being that are appreciably greater than terrorism. These are comprehensive in their nature and impacts — climate change, environmental disfigurement, resource depletion, footloose migration, grave poverty and inequality and the spread of weapons, especially of mass destruction, all combine to present significant dangers. No one country or group, no matter how powerful, is able to master let alone solve these afflictions; and only one institution, the United Nations, conceptually possesses the competence and potential for comprehensive appraisal and collective action — across such a range of multiple challenges.

The UN system was designed, of course, in a largely different era in order to prevent war and to foster peace, prosperity and equality. Many of its structures, notably the composition of its Security Council, are outdated or unco-ordinated. Inefficiencies abound. The system needs to move with the times. The growing tendency for great powers to sideline the world body must be resisted.

Both the role and potential of the United Nations, and the international legitimacy it embodies, are being challenged by multiple layers of change. The UN system was designed in a largely different era in order to prevent war and to foster peace, prosperity and equality. Many of its structures, notably the composition of its Security Council, are outdated or unco-ordinated. Inefficiencies abound. In practice and over a prolonged period, effective reform across the board in the United Nations has proved impossible. But the system needs to move with the times. The growing tendency for great powers to sideline the world body must be resisted.
proven a reliable proponent and defender of international rules-based order.

**Distinctive form**

In Asia regionalism takes its own distinctive form. After the 2008–09 global financial crisis, governments have amassed foreign exchange reserves to ensure financial independence from Atlantic sourced crisis. They have developed regional monetary and support arrangements, in addition to a veritable noodle bowl of trade/economic agreements with a professed goal eventually for a region wide bumper free trade area. China for its part has created a new development bank supported by most regional countries (and New Zealand) along with a very ambitious set of wide-ranging development projects under the rubric of a ‘new Silk Road’.

China’s importance as the engine for the Asian regional economy and beyond can hardly be exaggerated, although its growth rates look set to slow. In political and security terms, leadership in Asia has now to reconcile the interests of a more assertive China and those of the United States, which retains a considerable strategic stake within the region.

Such delicate accommodation will require constant diplomatic care on both sides and not be simply confined to regional dynamics alone. It involves as well the respective roles at the global level, including inside the UN system. One cannot be divorced from the other. The US–China relationship, in other words, permeates all levels of our present world existence and experience; other governments, including those of small countries, need to calibrate their foreign policy broadly and accordingly.

At the same time, large newly emergent economies from across the board, not just Asia, seek to institutionalise their international presence with the creation of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Although they do not present a united front on all issues and each member struggles with difficult development challenges, BRICS represents new weight in the balance of the international economy. That is exemplified further in the emergence of the G20 (comprising the biggest twenty economies of the world) as a new top table body involving heads of government, created in response to the 2008–09 global financial crisis.

**Intruding preoccupations**

Although this new piece of institutional furniture is primarily charged with concerns of the global economy, high-level political preoccupations will inevitably intrude. The G20 is, however, a self selected group and whatever global oversight role it evolves can only be to complement but not substitute for the United Nations — which retains the essential hallmark of international legitimacy. But the arrival of the G20 certainly adds much force to the need for reform within the United Nations to reflect modern realities.

Old ways of doing things collectively are indeed changing, which impacts upon the United Nations and its role. For example, rules and systems for delivery of aid (overseas development assistance) to developing countries are being reshaped by China, which offers to recipients a different model from traditional aid principles, having itself shared the experiences of under-development. The policies and practices of traditional Western donors that have influenced the United Nations are now much criticised by recipients as unwieldy, duplicative, bureaucratised and resource wasting.

There is particular objection to the conditionalities that invariably accompany traditional aid packages as well as the financial remedies proposed by the IMF for debt-ridden countries. According to a respectable body of international opinion, such conditionality does not work. Real pressures exist, therefore, to transform governance and accountability inside those international agencies and donor governments that are charged with resource transfers to the developing world.

There is likewise compelling need to remedy the significant gaps, insufficient co-ordination and lack of co-operation between the United Nations and its agencies, as well as the IMF and World Bank. As suggested above, one of the comparative advantages inherent in the United Nations and its agency system is a potential to encompass the crucial connections in the world between sustainable development and the environment, between climate change and resource security, between trade and indebtedness, poverty and conflict and so on. It is not so long ago that significant Western governments often sternly resisted such links as guides to international economic/social policy. But competition inside the United Nations and other agencies for influence and for turf continues to drive the system’s absence of cohesion and effectiveness.

**Indispensable foundation**

The United Nations has succeeded in establishing the principle that human security is the indispensable foundation for national and international security. The body of international human rights law enshrined by the United Nations provides a solid foundation. The ground-breaking annual UN Human Development Report provides key measurements to assist policy-makers. UN work, too, over the years in famine relief, and in devising protections for refugees and for children, as well as its leadership in overall development goal setting, is exemplary; even though the efforts suffer invariably from tightfisted UN member states and

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**Open cast mines are clear examples of environmental disfigurement**

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those governments anxious as well to protect borders; and there are and have been undeniable mistakes in implementation.

The multiple UN agencies do galvanise member governments in respect, for example, to health protections and improvements, to labour standards, to transport and aviation regulations, to meteorological co-operation, to cultural heritage, food and agricultural production standards and much else besides. To risk abandonment of all of this through neglect by large powers and small alike, and by allowing the United Nations to subside into irrelevance, would be the height of folly. Moreover, the UN system has, at member state request, discharged supervisory responsibilities for cease-fire arrangements, for keeping peace, for monitoring nuclear developments and for conduct of elections, frequently under harrowing conditions. There have inevitably been shortcomings and failures. In all of this, however, the United Nations frequently supplies a convenient scapegoat for deficiencies that actually derive from member states themselves.

Indeed, coalitions of the willing are becoming the preferred methods of choice for powerful member states concerned to assert leadership, not just in peace support missions but also in political, security and trade/economic relations more generally. Smaller countries confront hard and finely balanced choices about who or where to support. But basic interest is surely to remain anchored within the UN system that embodies international legitimacy; even in the face of indifference, obstruction or single-minded assertiveness by the powerful.

New Zealand has just completed a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. It has been a testing but creditable experience. It will hopefully have equipped this country with confidence and courage to stick with its convictions about the essential importance of an effective rules-based international system — even as powerful friends with whom New Zealand sat around the top table so recently are inclined themselves to set aside rules they consider unpalatable and assert leadership.

**Early test**

An early test of New Zealand resolve will be the prospective negotiation inside the UN General Assembly in 2017 of a treaty on nuclear disarmament. After decades of fruitless effort in the relevant subsidiary bodies of the United Nations to win support for such a negotiation, in the face of obdurate unremitting opposition from the nuclear weapon owning countries, the General Assembly has dexterously succeeded in assuming for itself the responsibility.

There can be no illusions that the nuclear weapon owning countries will ever be influenced by whatever the General Assembly is able to agree upon. It is not certain those countries will join in the negotiation. There can be no illusion either about how difficult it will be even without them to negotiate principles and content of a nuclear disarmament treaty in the plenary forum of the United Nations, with such a multitude of views, interests and aspirations around the table. Nonetheless, the mere prospect that such a draft treaty will be piloted through the General Assembly is a sufficiently powerful symbol in its own right. The considerable efforts to date by nuclear weapon owners to derail the initiative bear ample witness to that. Such efforts will doubtless continue. With others, the New Zealand disarmament ambassador has been assiduous in securing progress so far, even as traditional friends like Australia remain adamantly opposed and the way ahead is complex.

The assertion by the General Assembly of a right to a greater say in key questions traditionally monopolised by powerful Security Council members is reflected, too, in the way in 2016 the assembly sought to influence the selection of a new secretary-general. It devised a new procedure whereby candidates had to declare themselves, receive the approval of their governments and then submit to an open job interview before the assembled membership. The declared aim was to ensure greater transparency and, therefore, democracy in the selection process, hitherto the unique responsibility of the Security Council (and in particular the permanent members) meeting behind closed doors. In the final analysis, those aims may have been secured to a certain degree, but actual influence over the final choice of the new secretary-general was at best qualified.

General sentiment had, after all, favoured appointment of a woman for the first time, and from Eastern Europe, again the first. The final choice by permanent Security Council members was a man, from Western Europe — for the fourth time out of the eight UN secretary-generals to date. The new chief confronts truly formidable challenges in regenerating the United Nations. The Portuguese Antonio Guterres has credentials. New Zealand can at least take some consolation that it also had a genuine creditable candidate in the field for secretary-general.
Blame it on Grotius

John Goodman reflects on the legacy of the Dutch moralist Hugo Grotius in the evolution of international law.

During study in London, a wise international lawyer counselled that when asked for an opinion, one should first ask what answer is required. This dictum, which has charm, humour and perhaps several layers of meaning, was not invented by the British, who liked to borrow useful ideas from the Dutch, such as fine weaving, a monarch, banking, global trade and modern international law. The full genealogy of policy on the last two seems uncertain, but their iconic ‘father’, still somewhat revered in Atlantic and Pacific circles today, is arguably the Dutch moralist, jurist and political writer Hugo Grotius.

The life of Grotius, who lived in interesting times, is quickly told. He found himself caught between patrician Dutch republicans fighting off France and Spain, the old world Catholic powers and seething Dutch Calvinist underclasses out to impose ideas of predestination on Catholic powers, patricians and anyone else. His personal leanings lay towards none of these but to ‘natural’ freedoms for secular ends; unsurprisingly, he found himself at odds with almost everyone in Rotterdam, condemned to prison for life. Within a couple of years, however, his wife smuggled him out, hidden in a book chest. Thereafter he fled to Paris, and finding Paris still warm after 30 years’ war against Protestants, fled to Germany, just at the beginning of 30 years’ war against Catholics. He then ‘retir’d’ to Amsterdam, the most peaceful haven. No record exists, but he may have been tipped off by his contemporary, Descartes, another fugitive from justice, who wrote a book called Rules for the Direction of the Mind and claimed no quieter place for leisure and reflection existed than Amsterdam.

Along the way Grotius wrote his classic The Rights of War and Peace, which assumes in the modern scientific style that neither man nor states are subject to any predetermined restraints of the type hitherto supposed by princes and prelates but that the laws and morals necessary for men and states to live together in harmony were to be found in ‘nature’, his analytical starting point. He therefore formulated ‘natural freedoms’ in the terms we know today: freedom of the seas, trade and navigation. His insights, if not entirely unknown, were radical, as he was perhaps first to refocus moral issues and gear laws to the specific needs of new companies and changing times. Holland was the new Venice, the rising scientific, sea and commercial power, and his views naturally suited such interests. Indeed, they were written specifically for use by the Dutch East India Company in defence of its global trading interests. His Free Seas built upon an earlier work for the same company, written to justify the taking by a Dutch ship of a Portuguese trader on the high seas. The precise terms of Grotius’s brief from the company have not passed down to us. But whoever set them found Grotius ready with required answers. The book carried the long title On

Previous centuries are usually seen as lawless, while our enlightened days sometimes seem to show a veneer of law now applies. This is an error. The balance of power system set up by major countries in 1648 still rules. How was it done and how is this system perpetuated? Instrumental reason — the narrow sort used in courts to justify any position whatever — was not invented by Grotius, but he was among the first to show how it could be used to advance the national secular interest (as opposed to the interests of princes and the church). He thus bears heavy responsibility for the state of the international order today.
Natural law

Although ‘natural law’ can seem a shadowy concept to modern minds, Grotius's books are anything but that; they take a clear first place as positive, positivistic and humanist contributions to our common human life. They transformed international law, then as now seen as conservative, into a possible instrument of policy, much as parliaments view legislation. A biographer asserts ‘one cannot confine a great man to his century’.3 Grotius’s work has been elaborated since the 17th century but has come down to us essentially unchanged in principles, outlook and ambition. Freedom of trade, for example, remains an aspiration, its partial achievements ever subject to threat of restriction, and freedom of navigation is rarely free from some regional challenge. Nearly 400 years later, fully liberal shipping freedoms remain ‘unfinished’ business in trade negotiations, although negotiators these days do not usually cite him in support of his positions.

Old books on law, perhaps understandably, are less popular reading today than old books on war. Everybody, according to Adam Smith’s observation of coffee house broadsheets in his day, enjoys a good war, although this human frailty pre-dates Smith. In The Tatler of 19 May 1709, Addison and Steele, for example, wrote that ‘The Approach of Peace strikes a Pannick’ not only through armies facing loss of pay and rations but also through ‘the News-writers of Great Britain, whether Post-men or Post-boys’, who by their reports alone make their country masters of towns armies have not taken and achieve ‘compleated Victories’ where captains report ‘drewn Battle’. Rudyard Kipling, once a war correspondent himself, was objective and generous enough to report dialectical views held by British soldiers about journalists; presumably the views still chime somewhere for his books have never been out of print. The imaginative reductio ad absurdum famously appeared with Evelyn Waugh’s 1938 Scoop, a sketch in which throngs of foreign correspondents based far from a non-existent front successfully report battles in a war that is not happening.

It is not always easy to decide how much has since changed. In its day, not too long ago, official launch of the Allied/Kuwait war was appointment television viewing, and nightly television feeds from news-standard hotspots around the world still aim to boost channel ratings. Journalists are now ‘embedded’ within fighting troops, but it still seems possible for armies to declare victory and leave. Books such as Sun Tzu’s Art of War and Clausewitz’s On War have been revived to feed public appetite, reportedly found deep inside business school territory, rated helpful for today’s East India companies, some of which may be based in our own major urban centres.

The precise reasons for Clausewitz’s popularity may be obscure. On War, published posthumously by his widow in 1832, has not had an easy historical ride, being for too long stood on its head, edited to say the opposite of what it contains and blamed for igniting the 20th century’s European wars.5 Even when allowed to speak for itself, most focus seems to fall on sections dealing with frontal attacks and extracted hints of ruthlessness that, on their own, distort his purposes. The existential values he identified in the conduct of war are not in tune with public opinion everywhere today, but his most famous dictum — ‘war is the conduct of diplomacy by other means’ — did not mean for him that war was an independent option. His view was that it should be carried out, if it were carried out, according to the value of political objectives involved, as an instrument of policy with a view to diplomatic solution. The book is better known but possibly more misunderstood than Grotius’s, and perhaps deserves revisiting in times of troubled regional waters between competitive major powers.

War experience

Clausewitz spent active military service in line command positions, first in Prussia and — in a then globalised world — in Russia, where he witnessed the Russian retreat from Moscow, the paradoxical move that led to French defeat, and played a key role for the Russian side in concluding the Convention of Taurouggen, which neutralised key German contingents in Napoleon’s army, prelude to peace. His book reflects his war experience, from which he concluded all battlefield reports were misleading or wrong, perhaps especially if they came from captains. It also covers much military strategy, both attack and how to turn tactical defeat into strategic victory. A swift and mighty switch to attack — the shining sword of vengeance — is the brightest moment in defence strategy.7

France stood then, of course, in a case of aggression, challenging fate as well as logistics. The tactic may, nevertheless, be apt for companies in commercial strife today, provided always they do not grasp the shining sword at the wrong end.

Clausewitz’s work is seen as scientific and positivistic, which is just, but not usually as humanistic, which is unjust. Clausewitz arrived at his opinions based on analysis of what he had seen of the facts of life rather than dreams of what life ought to be like in an ideal world. In this he was the polar opposite of Henri Dunant, one-time Swiss banker regarded by many contemporaries as an unpractical dreamer. Chasing up imperial support for his visions of agricultural investment in North Africa, Dunant tracked Napoleon III down to a tent in Italy, the day after the French victory at Solferino in 1861. Like many a life-changing moment, Dunant’s encounter with a real battlefield was unsought and unintended but no less psychically real for that. Against heavy political and sectional opposition, including Florence Nightingale’s lukewarm views of international organisations, he single-handedly went on to change the direction of his own — and the world’s — thinking. He founded the Red Cross in 1863, showing that, if a dreamer, he was a determined dreamer. Dunant’s principal ambition, however,
was to abolish war, as expounded in his moving observer’s report Un souvenir de Solferino, published immediately after this, last, pre-industrial battle. He omits no horror: suppurating wounds, stench, pitiable men and the movement of horse-drawn cannon trains over many among 40,000 living dead sprawled across the killing fields of Stiva dela Riviere.

Frequently enough, Clausewitz observed the same kind of scene, well-known as an historical type from Callot’s engravings of the Thirty Years War or Goya’s luminous images of brutality in Spain, and to later audiences perhaps from Tolstoy’s novel or Picasso’s Guernica, though not from nightly television, which prizes reality but not always very much. Clausewitz, however, thought he perceived additional realities about humanity and its condition which led him to conclude that war and its mise en scène were inherent in human nature, and could not be abolished. Clausewitz’s analysis, besides putting human psychology at its centre, showed the curious human tendency to create the very dangers it most feared, how war is a continuum (starting with mere displays of military force) and how victory is never final. Thus, he said, the risks of war needed political control and direction, a role not within the brief of generals. Two very different students of war thus show how identical facts may produce opposite conclusions, at least on human nature. The jury may still be out on human nature, although testimony provided by Freud, Jung and William Blake is persuasive on humanity’s capacity to create heaven in hell’s despite, and vice versa.

Unfortunate misreading

Whoever is eventually given right, a right reading of Clausewitz shows that he was not only scientific and modern but also humanist. As is less well-known outside the world of scholars than perhaps it should be, On War was stood on its head by Moltke and Ludendorff, who left out the political control thing, and where they did not reject him used him as bogus authority for their own inverted views. These were that war was the glory and natural destiny of men and nations, and should therefore be run by generals, who understood the business best. In their time and for reasons beyond the scope of a simple essay to explain, these ideas gained wide appeal in Germany and it took that country, today among model nations, two disastrous attempts with Clausewitz upside-down before 20th century scholars discovered that he had been interfered with. Full editions were not easily available in Germany until the 1950s, still not in English. The progress of ideas, however, is usually better achieved by re-evaluation than by selective editing; Emperor Haile Selassie chopped the death of the king scene in Macbeth, but this failed to save his throne; other editors of Shakespeare usually leave it in. As with most books, reading On War the right way up may diminish its thrill, if there is thrill, but does more justice to its central ideas.

The science of past wars may seem relevant today. We have recently seen the annexation of Crimea and decisions to station Western troops in North-eastern Europe, the first such acts in 70 years; reminders with Brexit that the European project formed part of the American-lead containment of communism after the Second World War; astonishing advances of the Islamic State, the first victories of this kind since the 8th century; and, after 400 years of decline, the re-emergence of China as a super-power-to-be, at times already seen as a challenge to American supremacy. Pope Francis has spoken of a ‘Third World War’ (albeit a social one). History, consigned to the dustbin in the 1990s, has re-emerged in the form of Clio. The lésé majesté may have annoyed; she has picked up pace.

Whatever the wisdom of Roman goddesses, the world is surely dynamic. Today’s major powers are not those of the 8th or 17th centuries, the Concert of Vienna or even the mid-20th century. It is dynamic for well-understood reasons: power is competitive while room at the top is limited. Perhaps not wholly unlike the competitive professions at home, super-powers must always be about the job of testing each other out. Doubtless, this may be part of what is happening in the South China Sea, where commanders and political masters are placed on record saying different things.6

Unconscious dangers

Clausewitz, 80 years before Freud or Samuel Butler, twenty years before Freud, showed that unconsciously repressing realities may pose dangers.7 Yet that approach can still seem first preference among idealists raised in those best of times, the now distant nine-ties, with its mood of brave, new, liberal, unipolar utopias. The risk is that the best of times may forget the worst of times and move on, a gambit familiar in diplomacy sometimes label statefulness, sometimes fancy footwork. Perceptibly, much remains to be done to put peace and security on firmer footing.

In this kind of situation, Thomas Paine was fond of quoting Archimedes:

’What Archimedes said of the mechanical powers may be applied to Reason and Liberty: ‘Had we,’ said he, ‘a place to stand upon, we might raise the world.’ Journalism, Addison and Steele notwithstanding, shines a valuable daily light on where we stand and public opinion played a large role in Dunant’s success. But few now believe exposure alone will supply the mechanical powers necessary to abolish war and bring about peace, uncannily reflecting Dunant’s despair at failure of his main objective. Mechanics, indeed, have gone the other way, rendering war more industrial by quantum degrees, and limiting the effective influence of non-nuclear nations. Finding place on which to stand for the restraint of super-powers remains elusive.

The latest international mandate to guarantee peace and security rests, of course, with the UN Security Council, re-located there following failure in the League of Nations and the end in 1914 of the balance of power system. The United Nations has had its fine moments, despite a patchy record till the 1990s and media reports apt to excoriate it as a body both lacking in powers and one that does not use the powers it does not have.8 When member
states confer authority upon it to act, as they must before it can, the United Nations has managed scores of co-operative exercises the press barely mentions and the reader easily forgets, particularly mandated peacekeeping missions, international criminal trials, human rights, disaster relief, refugees, health and environment and development aid of one kind or another. Albeit unsteady at times, the United Nations has built moral persuasive powers, which can moderate, and on occasion surely have moderated, unprincipled actions and encourage principled ones. Its initiatives have encouraged higher, if uneven, levels of international aspiration than in any previous century. It has presided over decades during which war between European countries came to be considered unthinkable. Efforts in parallel fields — the IMF, World Bank and the GATT/WTO — can also chalk up achievements, doubtless alongside failures. These forums, moreover, enable small countries, including New Zealand, and mid-sized ones to give voice to reason, freedom and fairness. Such countries are nowadays more vocal, and perhaps of some influence, on the world stage to a degree that would have astounded, say, Tom Paine, himself a one-man change agent on two continents.

**Nuclear reality**

But success may also engender forgetfulness, if not illusion. The closer discussion approaches reserve powers of war and peace — and their correlatives in disarmament — the more the list of real co-operative success trails away, now often unremarked. Levels of nuclear weapon holdings have long been seen as a major threat to civilisation, yet one recent book dealing with its future considers cultural clashes, terrorism, proxy wars, nuclear testing, arms proliferation and much else but makes no mention of today’s major stockpiles. But who nowadays would rule out accident and miscalculation as cause of war? The reality of treaty guarantees of peace and security thus needs to be seen right side up. Has the 19th century system even yet been effectively replaced? Under de facto nuclear risk backed by the Security Council veto, the question arises as to who is dependent on whom for peace, the major nuclear powers on the United Nations or the other way around?

In setting up the UN Charter, permanent members of the Security Council conferred upon themselves a veto on any proposal of substance, except those involving such a member itself, but even if voted down on that, that member had a further or fallback veto available to scotch any actual sanction by way of follow-up. Permanent members could also veto any procedural proposal, as these could in practice be treated as matters of substance. All this could be done without judicial review. A number of small (including New Zealand) and mid-sized countries voiced concerns. Such a veto could imply permanent members accepted the international process only up to a point, putting non-veto countries under restraints whilst preserving old freedoms under customary laws for themselves. If one permanent member came to dominate the body, the council itself may not be effectively restrained. Such circumstances could make international law and morality subordinate to ultimate powers (although this is not the same thing as unimportant). Today such concerns have arguably come to pass: countries in breach of no international law themselves have been declared in breach, and intervention has followed.

The double, if not treble, veto used to strike contemporary observers as absolute political power equal to anything dreamt up by Richelieu in his *Political Testament*, locus classicus for absolute power on the national scene. (The *Testament* arguably beats Hobbes’s *Leviathan* by an English country mile; Hobbes gave a nod to the Independents (especially in Part III), and thought all men created equal and that power originated with them even if its surrender to the monarch was irrevocable. Richelieu, apart from not sleeping well, suffered no such constitutional weaknesses.)

**Profound difference**

A situation where major powers seek to declare war unilaterally on their own terms without regard to diplomatic values is profoundly contrary to the philosophy of Clausewitz, who demonstrated no victory in battle is ever final and that war initiated without reference to specific diplomatic goals is anti-humanistic, ‘something pointless and devoid of sense’. Small and middle-sized countries thus do wisely, and possibly all that can be done, in shoring up the UN system, a Sisyphean task of ever rolling the stone uphill.

This may return us to the place from whence we came, possibly recognising it not for the first time. Grotius, path-breaker, showed laws and rules need not be set in concrete but could be instruments of new progressive policy. But Grotius, popular writer, found his books instantly translated into English, French and Spanish, allowing super-powers of the day to catch on and respond with instrumental policies of their own that resonate today. Super-powers, then as now, found breaches in the new international law and new reasons to go to war.

Fates are perhaps no more confined to their own times than great men. The future may yet show Sisyphus stronger than Clio. Camus thought so. His deeply humanistic, optimistic theatre of absurd shows ‘il faut imaginer Sisyphus heureux’.

Rachefelt thought not, on grounds that ‘feeble spirits live in the future because it is a soft job’. But Chesterton was a journalist far from the front. Anyone spending 72 unbroken hours in a UN meeting will wish to call him out on both counts. Until the situation improves, however, and when it does, it may be tempting to blame it on Grotius.

**NOTES**

4. Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* (Bonn, 1952). Easily accessible English versions are abridged and risk misleading as the work is a philosophical discourse, not a textbook. The edition by Anatol Rapoport, a peace campaigner, follows a 1908 English translation and omits without signal Part Two, including on defensive war and the right of a community to defend itself, which Clausewitz considered most important: *On War* (Harmondsworth, 1968).
5. Vom Kriege, p.634 (writer’s translation).
Climate change or climate catastrophe?

Hugh Steadman warns that immediate action is demanded to meet the threat posed by global warming.

‘Climate change’ is an anodyne expression that functions to retain the anxiety of the global population within the manageable parameters that the situation does not warrant. After all, no-one denies that the climate changes from time to time. The planet has experienced a series of ice-ages and mini-ice ages and warmer periods in between. However, the current argument, which is being waged with increasing ardour, is not whether or not change is occurring, but whether or not the current changes represent mere fluctuations around a norm, or an out-of-control, existential catastrophe.

The debate is considerably complicated by the involvement of the most powerful vested interests on the planet. These are the companies which, since the Industrial Revolution, have come to control the supply of fossil energy and the fortunes of the governments and shareholders dependent on its continued and profitable trading.

Since well before 1991, in which year Shell produced its documentary Climate of Concern, these companies must have been aware of the link between emissions from the burning of their products and the potential intolerable rise in planetary temperatures.1 Despite this fatal knowledge, Big Oil (Shell included) has continued to extract oil from Canadian tar sands, seek new reserves through drilling and, in general, maximise the extraction and combustion of fossil fuels. As is well illustrated in the film Merchants of Doubt2 and as did Big Tobacco before it, the fossil fuel industry has continued to invest millions in persuading politicians and their publics that the pursuit of its economic business as usual is in everyone’s best interests.

In consequence, the voices arguing that the current rapid acceleration of climate warming is man-made and that urgent action needs to be taken to counter the phenomenon are often rendered ineffective by those whose incomes and fortunes depend on downplaying the threat. The situation is not helped by the many more who, given the choice of accepting bad news or good news, tend naturally to opt for the good.

Bogus reports

With so many axes being ground, bogus scientific reports being bought and published and so many soft variables to be taken into account by climate scientists attempting accurately to forecast an unknown future, certainty is well-nigh impossible to come by. Under these circumstances, and seeing that what is claimed to be at risk is humankind’s continued existence, it is as well to adopt the precautionary principle (in other words, Murphy’s Law — ‘Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.’)

The precautionary principle (or precautionary approach) to risk management states that if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public, or to the environment, in the absence of scientific consensus (that the action or policy is not harmful), the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking that action.

It is fairly simple to measure the amount of carbon dioxide (the most plentiful of the greenhouse gases) in the atmosphere. Before the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, global average CO₂ content was about 280 parts per million. During the past 200,000 or so years of homosapiens’ existence, CO₂ has fluctuated between about 180 ppm during ice ages and 280 ppm during inter-glacial warm periods. The vast majority of scientists who study this changing of the climate are agreed on cause and effect: that an increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere results in an increase in planetary temperatures. Currently, CO₂ levels are around 407 ppm. The last time they were at this level, about 3 million years ago, the sea-level was about 20 metres higher than it is today. If there is no reduction in greenhouse gases levels, and if no further increase is allowed, that is where the sea-level is ultimately headed. Fortunately it should take several centuries to get there.

Prior to that, from the start of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century until the 1950s, the average greenhouse gases increase was around 1 ppm per annum: from about 1950 to 2015, the average annual increase was around 3 ppm. In 2016, this total increased to 4 ppm — the fastest rate of annual increase on record. On the improbable assumption that the annual rate of emissions does not increase beyond 4 ppm per annum, the planet is now on track to reach 450 ppm in about ten years’ time. That figure represents CO₂ alone. In fact, were the additional and more effective greenhouse gas, methane, which is being released at an increased rate due to increases in intensive livestock farming and fracking, to be included in the figure, the CO₂ equivalent would already have exceeded the 450 ppm mark.

Carbon emissions

In the words of a recent Stratfor report, since the onset of the Industrial Revolution mankind has pumped some 150 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Almost half that amount has been emitted since 2000, 9.9 billion tons of it in 2016 alone. U.S. President Donald Trump claims to think that links between carbon emissions and climate change are ‘a hoax’, but if so, the hoax has taken in almost every scientist in the world. By burning fossil fuels, they believe, we have altered the chemis-

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Hugh Steadman has three children and four grandchildren. He is a founder member of Climate Karanga Marlborough Inc. www.climatekaranga.org.nz

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New Zealanders and the rest of humanity face an existential crisis such as other living species have not experienced since the Permian–Triassic extinction event (also known as the great dying) of 250 million years ago, during which an estimated 96 per cent of all living species were lost. Now we are well embarked on the Earth’s sixth such calamitous event. This time it is our species that is causing it and only our actions that can prevent it. For humanity to survive this crisis, national governments need to reject the democratic imperative of not alarming their populations.
Climate change policies. Before publication, the IPCC's forecasts are filtered by a UN panel of national representatives, including those from major oil producing countries such as the United States and Russia. The panel works to achieve a consensus before publication and, as such, its reports inevitably entail political compromises.

Given the selfish, national interests at stake, it is fair to assume that the reports published are more optimistic in tone than the scientific reality might justify. The reports do not attempt to forecast the future. They simply lay out a series of options for the world's governments to pursue in relation to carbon emissions and then state what the consensus scientific view is in regard to the consequences of each scenario. Given the consensus-building process and the need for politicians to keep their electorates blinkered and contented, the more optimistic IPCC scenarios are the ones more likely to be adopted, but are less likely to be realised than the worse-case scenarios on offer.

**Optimistic scenarios**

Governments, such as that of New Zealand, which do not want to call into question their current plans for economic growth tend to adopt the most optimistic of the IPCC's alternative scenarios. Hence, in New Zealand, local government bodies responsible for planning for the safety of their communities are working to an unjustifiably optimistic assumption that the sea-level rise by the end of the century will be between 0.5 metres and 0.8 metres.

The IPCC already records a temperature rise of 1°C since 1880 and the rate of rise accelerating in line with the accelerating rise in the greenhouse gases content of the atmosphere.

In 2015, courtesy of Presidents Obama and Xi Jinping, the Paris conference resulted in the Paris Accord (since rejected by President Trump). The accord was based on the IPCC’s projection and designed to limit CO₂ levels and, consequently, global temperature and sea level rises. These were the targets set out in what was to become the legally binding agreement, which concluded the conference:

- a longterm goal of keeping the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels;
- to aim to limit the increase to 1.5°C, since this would significantly reduce risks and the impacts of climate change.

Different nations promised different levels of emission reductions, which, when totalled, and in the improbable event of their being adhered to, would not achieve the 2°C target, but might be sufficient to keep the temperature rise below 3°C. There is a further

**Crucial points**

Such crucial points would include a rise in ambient temperatures sufficient to initiate the drying out and burning of the carbon sequestered in the Amazon rain forest, the melting of large areas of sea ice, which currently act as mirrors reflecting the sun's rays back into space, or a massive release of currently frozen methane. What is inevitable is that, as the temperature rises, the atmospheric levels of other greenhouse gases, such as methane and water vapour, will also rise, ultimately leading to an uncontrollable acceleration of the overall rise in global temperatures and Earth ceasing to be a viable human habitat.

Enter the IPCC. It is the forecasting agency most generally accepted by governments as the authority on which to base their climate change policies. Before publication, the IPCC's forecasts are filtered by a UN panel of national representatives, including

The above figures in Graph 1, from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with their best case and worst case scenarios for future emissions, remain relatively undisputed. The disputes and uncertainty centre on a diversity of views as to what the consequences of this increase in the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will be. At one end of the scale, there are those ‘climate deniers,’ such as President Trump, who argues that scientists claiming that human activity is having a perceptible impact on the climate are perpetuating a hoax; that current climate fluctuations remain within normal parameters and will continue to do so irrespective of fossil fuel emissions. At the other end of the scale, are such as Professor Guy Macpherson, who argues, unconvincingly, that humanity will be extinct before 2040.

Where Macpherson appears to have got it wrong is in his timings: in equating points of no return with tipping points. When the patrol leader trips the wire, the pin on the Claymore mine is pulled and a point of no return is crossed. Depending on the length of the fuse, the tipping point comes later, when the mine’s high explosive charge turns from a solid into a hot, gaseous state and the patrol turns from living flesh to bloody shreds. After such a wire is tripped, it may well become impossible to prevent further disastrous feedback loops leading to the crossing of the next point of no return and ultimately, depending on the length of fuse, the arrival of the next tipping point.
conference scheduled for 2020 to review the situation, with the intention of making adjustments to emission targets as required.

**Over-ambitious targets**

Given the political differences faced by a disunited humanity, the Paris targets seem over-ambitious and incompatible with the future forecast in the IPCC chart in Graph 3, which has the temperature stabilising in ‘a few centuries,’ after a currently unimaginable rapid reduction in global CO₂ emissions.

Over-ambitious targets

Given the political differences faced by a disunited humanity, the Paris targets seem over-ambitious and incompatible with the future forecast in the IPCC chart in Graph 3, which has the temperature stabilising in ‘a few centuries,’ after a currently unimaginable rapid reduction in global CO₂ emissions.

Graph 3:

Key to the projections, are the best guesstimates of the temperature rise consequent on the differing levels of future greenhouse gases concentrations and what are to be the likely consequences for planetary life of each such temperature rise. The generally accepted, but most probably too optimistic pivot point,⁹ is that the CO₂ threshold of 450 ppm will result in a temperature rise of 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

Graph 4, taken from a recent and rather alarmist book, Climageddon, links emission levels with temperature rises and their effects on the climate and the species dependent on it.

Graph 4:

At 400 ppm, the climatic consequences of the increased greenhouse gas loading of the atmosphere attributable to mankind’s industrial activities are only just becoming apparent. All the above is reason enough for acute anxiety and impossibly prompt action, but the bad news is in fact considerably worse. In parallel to changes to the climate, the industrial age has had multiple other adverse effects on the planetary environment and the ecological systems on which human and all other life is dependent. To quote Stéphane Fisher from Monash University:

climate change is a problem, not the problem. At the moment much of the focus is on climate and there’s no doubt this is a problem that requires emergency action now to see if we can avoid the worst of the tipping points. But there are many ‘showstoppers’, any and all of which can bring humanity and biodiversity to a sticky end.

Without biodiversity in all its forms, which creates the complex web of interrelated systems that hold the biosphere in homeostasis, things that we take for granted such as temperature, the level of oxygen in the atmosphere or the even concentration of salt in the sea, will no longer support the life we know. Something other than climate change is driving the current mass extinction. The impacts of climate change, though potentially catastrophic, are in the main yet to come — albeit sooner than we have previously expected.

The current trajectory of biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse is being driven by cutting down forests, over-fishing, chemical pollution, soil degradation and erosion, habitat destruction, desertification and so on.¹³
Political consequences

Humanity’s current rate of emissions into the atmosphere and draw-down of the Earth’s finite resources is in no way sustain-
able. If catastrophe is to be avoided, radical changes, political, eco-
omic, societal and attitudinal, will have to be made. In fact, the
changes required are of such magnitude that it is hard to believe
current political systems will be able voluntarily to make the nec-
essary adjustments. It is far more likely that the planet, accompa-
nied by much wailing and gnashing of teeth, will force them upon
the nations of the world.

In 2016 the New Zealand government produced a paper on
changes to the New Zealand’s climate that are to be anticipated by
2100. The reader must make their own judgement as to how
courageous future governments will be and which of the scenarios
offered are most likely to be realised.14

The VIVID report, sponsored by GLOBE NZ, a cross-
party group of New Zealand parliamentarians, was released in
March 2017. It details possible routes by which the New Zea-
land economy might be induced to conform to the ambitious
and, from the time perspective, inadequate targets signed up to
in the Paris Accord.15 The initial parliamentary debate, which
followed publication, would indicate a better late than never
recognition across all parties that the problem exists and has to
be addressed. The parliamentary debate on the VIVID report is
heartening.16

Determining factor

As the 21st century moves on, climate change, or climate catastro-
phe, will become the determining factor in international relations.
By the 22nd century, international relations might no longer be
relevant. Humans might no longer exist, or their multiple nations
have been subsumed under a single institution of global govern-
ance.

The current status of the global climate, as outlined above, is
subject to two major developments, one adverse and one favour-
able, both of which would appear to be unstoppable. The first
is population growth. Two centuries ago, the human population
stood at approximately one billion. Today it stands at around sev-
en billion. In 2070, it is scheduled to peak at around 10.5 billion.
More humans will consume more energy and more of the Earth’s
dfast dwindling resource reserves.

The second development is what is known as ‘the solar
disruption’. These are technological advances, which will en-
able alternative, renewable energy sources to replace the burning
of fossil fuels. The key question is how quickly this can be
achieved.18

Practical consequences

As global temperatures exceed the unrealistic targets set in Paris,
sea levels will rise in lock-step. The present, stable, climate-defin-
ing, ocean current and wind patterns will change. The unfamiliar
weather patterns and major disruptive events such as flooding,
droughts and high winds, which are already impacting human
populations, will increase in both magnitude and frequency.
Many, or even most, species of plant and animal will not have
-evolutionary time in which to adjust to the changes and will be-
come extinct. Multiple eco-systems and food chains will break.

Salt water will invade aquifers and, as glaciers melt, river flows
will become erratic. As the oceans heat up and become more ac-
-dic, their ability to absorb and process CO₂ will decrease. Farmers
and fishermen will no longer be able to rely on their harvests.
Desertification will increase, large tracts of land will become un-
productive and then uninhabitable. National economies will col-
lapse and states will fail.

Human populations and other species will embark on mas-
-sive migrations. Already we see cognac grapes being grown in
England and far-sighted American millionaires buying bolt-holes
south and north of the respective 40th parallels. Given a 3–4°C
rise in temperatures, large sections of the intermediary equatorial
section, will be the first to come uninhabitable. While rising tem-
peratures and retreating snow-lines might make northern parts
of the North American and Eurasian continents seemingly (and
temporarily) more benign, the disruptions, caused by increasing
hordes of traumatised, desperate and resentful refugees, most cer-
tainly will not.

Global catastrophe

A most commonly cited forecast of the cause of the first outbreak
of war between nuclear armed states has it triggered by the an-
ticipated depletion of the Indus. As Himalayan glaciers retreat,
Indian farmers will get first pick of its reduced flows prior to the
residue becoming available to the multiple Pakistani farms also
dependent on its waters. The acrimony between the two states
rises to a level when one anticipates a first nuclear strike from the
other and opts instead to attempt a pre-emptive strike.

One only has to see the current disruption in the European
Union, brought about by a mere one or two million refugees dis-
placed by drought and smallscale warfare in the Moslem world,
to imagine the magnitude of the disasters that will follow the dis-
placement of hundreds of millions, sometimes supported by the
armed remnants of their national armed forces.

It is as though the nations of the world have been warned of
the approach of a large asteroid on a collision course with Earth.
They can all scatter in terror and vainly fight each other over non-
existent safe havens, or they can unite and seek a global solution
to the problem. Already, we see the United States, the imagined
leader among nations, just two years after the Paris climate sum-
mit, setting the example of breaking ranks on the resultant accord
in pursuit of what it imagines to be its own, short-term, economic
advantage at the long-term expense of all humanity.

Needed action

For humanity to survive this crisis, national governments need
to reject the democratic imperative of not alarming their popula-
tions. The precautionary principle demands an immediate aban-
donment of a policy of allowing their economies to function on
a business-as-usual basis. If governments fail to mobilise immedi-
ately to educate and fully alert their citizenry to the approaching
peril, the steps that will ultimately be required to solve the prob-
lem may well become impossible. Unpopular political decisions
to put the nations of the world on an austere, emergency war-
footing need urgent implementation.

It is impossible to imagine such decisions being taken simul-
taneously by multiple national governments. It therefore seems
reasonable for individual nations to seek a means to establish a
climate dedicated, parallel United Nations organisation with in-
dependent, veto-free, executive powers and not dependent for its
funding on the random charity of its members.

Until the asteroid is diverted from its present course, political
thought and endeavour needs to be devoted to finding a way to
build a tolerable and effective system of global governance. Lobbying other nations and helping lead them to coalesce around such a proposal should have the highest priority on any government’s foreign policy agenda. Should such a global co-operative solution prove beyond the wit of humankind, the science seems to indicate that that kind is unlikely to have more than two or three generations left to run.

NOTES
2. www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8i9zGFDtc.
4. Ibid.
5. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intergovernmental_Panel_on_Climate_CHANGE.
16. A most remarkable event in New Zealand politics. www.reddit.com/r/newzealand/comments/65aps4/the_new_zealand_parliament_has_for_the_first_time/.
17. www.stratfor.com/weekly/imagining-world-after-fossil-fuels?id=be1ddd5371&uuid=4ebe036-8cd5-4e08-a1b0-17cee95ac601.
Regional security: challenges and opportunities

Mark Mitchell outlines New Zealand’s approach to security in the Asia–Pacific region and promises that it will remain outward looking and engaged.

The Shangri-La Dialogue is one of the world’s pre-eminent institutions for defence diplomacy. It provides a chance for friends and neighbours from the Asia–Pacific region and beyond to talk openly about the challenges and opportunities we face in our region. Responses to global threats are only effective when all states, no matter their size, have the opportunity to share their views and perspectives, for we all have a role to play.

I will begin by briefly touching on the global threats that impact the prosperity and security of every country here. Our 2016 Defence White Paper highlighted the fast-moving international security environment that continues to test us on several fronts. We are now faced with a number of challenges which combine multiple threats, actors and competing security interests, and which have global application. Localised, conventional challenges are no longer the norm.

We have discussed nuclear proliferation, particularly the current threats posed by North Korea’s nuclear and missile testing, which New Zealand condemns in the strongest terms. We have discussed the ever-growing threat of violent extremism, which reaches across the globe, including the problem of returning foreign terrorist fighters, from Iraq and Syria. We know that terror organisations look to galvanise support and exploit porous borders, disenfranchised individuals and the access provided by the internet and social media. This is a clear and present security threat to us all, and there is no clearer reminder of this than the horrendous attacks in London on 4 June. Once again, the British capital has experienced a terror attack with the loss of innocent lives, and we send our condolences to those who have lost loved ones.

This dialogue is timely in allowing us to focus on how we can resolve in the fight against ISIS and address the threat this corrupted ideology presents. We have also discussed how the dual processes of globalisation and the digital revolution cross borders to produce immediate connection to families, companies and countries. But these same connections also provide instant links between attacker and victim, actor and target. And we have seen recently how harmful cyber attacks can be, and what damage can be inflicted on civilian life and infrastructure.

New Zealand, as a connected global citizen, is not immune to these threats. These are clearly issues of significance. We are constantly challenging ourselves on how best to use our resources and capabilities to contribute, credibly and effectively, to countering global threats.

Strong supporter

We are a very strong supporter of the rules-based order, and of international norms. For example, we co-drafted the United Nations Security Council-led Resolution 2286 for the Protection of Civilians. This resolution was the first of its kind to focus on the prevention of attacks against medical personnel and healthcare facilities in armed conflict. Eighty-four states joined New Zealand in co-sponsoring the text, making it one of the most widely supported Security Council resolutions ever. It is now being implemented in theatres of conflict, including, for example, Syria.

New Zealand’s support for an international rules-based system is not a rhetorical statement. It is real, and it is critical for our economic well-being. Enjoying the benefits of such a system means that New Zealand, like other countries, has an obligation to fulfil the responsibilities associated with it.

We are a maritime nation. We have the fourth largest exclusive economic zone in the world. Ninety-five per cent of New Zealand’s goods trade is by sea, linked to markets far from our shores. We place great importance on both freedom of navigation and maintaining open trade lanes. New Zealand has a fundamental interest in ensuring that the legal framework and protections provided by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea are univer-

Hon Mark Mitchell MP is the minister of defence. This article is the edited text of an address he gave at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on 4 June.
sally upheld.

And across the Asia–Pacific region, we all have a collective stake in maritime security and stability. This provides clear incentives to manage maritime and territorial disputes peacefully. The South China Sea may be some distance from New Zealand, but, similar to other countries, over half of our trade transits this area. We therefore have a direct interest in how tensions are managed and miscalculations avoided. New Zealand is concerned by actions that undermine peace and erode trust. We continue to call on the parties to manage the situation peacefully and will continue to support initiatives, including a comprehensive ASEAN–China Code of Conduct on the South China Sea, to manage tensions.

Maritime meeting

We are active and focused on building regional architecture to counter security concerns. Most recently, New Zealand initiated a proposal to hold a South-west Pacific heads of maritime forces meeting aimed at developing co-ordination and capability, to test whether this would be a useful piece of architecture. Maritime domain security is important to us, given that the New Zealand Defence Force must cover a search and rescue zone that stretches from north of the Equator all the way to the South Pole, halfway to Australia, and halfway to South America.

We also work hard to make sure we contribute to the shaping of discussions around global threats, both bilaterally and multilaterally. In the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus (ADMM+), we are working with our partner the Philippines to shape the region’s response to cyber attacks through the inaugural Experts’ Working Group on Cyber Security. This working group will draw on the comprehensive work from the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, amongst others. This is a sensitive topic for all, and there will be a variety of approaches to how states individually respond to cyber threats. However, we are confident that with the opportunity for frank discussion as provided by regional security institutions like the ADMM+, we can achieve collective outcomes.

Multilateral platforms provide small states with the ability to be part of a collective approach that contributes to regional and global solutions. Advancing the role of small states has always been a priority for New Zealand. For example, in the year 2000, the Pacific Islands Forum faced a security environment that had deteriorated to a point where patterns of lawlessness, political upheaval and economic uncertainty were the norm. The forum adopted a comprehensive collective responsibility approach, and a key result was the Biketawa Declaration. This declaration codifies a number of guiding principles, including equal rights for all citizens, the importance of equitable economic, social and cultural development and a commitment to good governance, including democratic processes, institutions and the rule of law. The Pacific Islands countries collectively built the possibility of a regional response in the form of the declaration and with the help of others, including Australia and New Zealand. This instituted mechanisms to support the rules-based order. With this came action, and progress.

RAMSI termination

The withdrawal of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) occurred in June, after fourteen years. RAMSI was established in 2003 at the request of the Solomon Islands government, under the auspices of the Biketawa Declaration. It followed a five-year period of destabilising conflict in the Solomon, known as ‘The Tensions’. RAMSI’s mandate was to restore civil order, stabilise government finances, promote longer-term economic recovery and rebuild the Solomon Islands’ machinery of government.

New Zealand is also committed to collective responses to threats outside of its immediate region. We recognise the interdependence between global threats and the security of our ‘neighbourhood’. We recognise, for example, that the threat of ISIS is a threat to our regional security, the tenets of international law and a rules-based order. It is in response to these imperatives that we contribute to countering the threat of ISIS by both military and non-military means. In 2015, together with our Australian partners, New Zealand formally established its Building Partner Capacity training mission in Iraq, as part of the United States-led Operation Inherent Resolve. Our joint mission provides training to Iraqi security forces to defeat ISIS.

The over-arching Operation Inherent Resolve is a prime example of contributions from across the globe, large and small, to collective responsibility and international co-operation. We have joined over 60 countries in the US-led coalition, including a plethora of small states from Slovenia to Qatar and Bahrain. We are all able to contribute in a diverse range of ways.

Apparent value

From the Pacific Islands to Iraq, Syria and beyond, the value of collective responsibility is apparent. A strong multilateral system provides the opportunity for small states to contribute to broader conversations. Small states can bring a perspective and view that provides the opportunity for small states to contribute to broader conversations. Small states can bring a perspective and view that can help build and develop responses to some of the world’s biggest threats.

New Zealand’s approach to security is grounded in the conduct of constructive discussions paired with real action. We will continue to work towards an environment where all states can make credible contributions, which will strengthen the resilience of the regional security architecture, and its ability to counter global threats. I believe there are always opportunities for progress, even in discord.

The government in which I am proud to serve is very firm in its belief that it is critical for New Zealand’s future that we remain outward looking and engaged with the world. We take an optimistic view, and reject the thinking that we have reached a point where our threats have overwhelmed our opportunities. That optimism is the story of the Asia–Pacific region, the engine of world economic growth for the last 50 years. It is the story of ASEAN, a body that has brought peace and harmony to a region previously rocked by conflict. It is a powerful story of struggle, challenge, passion and success. The next chapter is being written and we all have a hand on the pen. What we write is what our children will read. We must get it right.
When people think about New Zealand’s most famous son, Sir Edmund Hillary, they mostly think about the quiet Auckland beekeeper who conquered Everest in 1953. Of course, there is much more to the man. He raised money for the Sherpa communities in Nepal that built schools, hospitals and much more. His commitment to the people of South Asia was also reflected in his successful term in the 1980s as New Zealand’s high commissioner to India.

As the most senior New Zealander in the management of the World Bank, I have come to appreciate Sir Edmund’s commitment to the people of South Asia and believe it shows how much New Zealand can offer the world. This will not only make the world a better place but can also help New Zealand too.

At the World Bank we have two big goals. We want to end extreme poverty by 2030 by cutting the percentage of people living on less than $1.90 a day to no more than 3 per cent of the world’s population. Our second big goal is to promote shared prosperity in the world by fostering the income growth of the bottom 40 per cent for every country.

New Zealand is an important partner for the World Bank in achieving these goals. It is valued both for its thought leadership and financial support to the International Development Association, the World Bank’s fund for the poorest countries, as well as its support for World Bank development work in the Pacific.

Altered focus

In recent years New Zealand’s focus in its development policy has shifted to its own geographic area, with money and advice going increasingly to the Pacific area. This region is a legitimate source of concern for New Zealand. Failed states in the Pacific could have an immediate effect on the country.

I am far from alone in observing that geopolitical volatility is on the increase around the world, not just in the Pacific region. In working with others, New Zealand can also benefit from looking beyond the Pacific region to help address the causes of this instability before they hurt the country’s interests, and those of New Zealand’s trading partners.

Economic development plays an important role in stabilising countries. It can provide jobs and opportunities. With these jobs and opportunities comes hope. This can prevent local problems from becoming global ones. As history has shown, the world can pay a big price for failed states. They can export terrorism, piracy and communicable diseases, and destabilise nearby countries and possibly whole regions. Failed states can trigger mass migrations, as we have seen in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, leading to instability in even the most advanced countries.

I work for the World Bank in South Asia and this region is critical to achieving many global goals, from ending poverty to preventing climate change. This region has both opportunity and risk. It has huge markets for New Zealand, such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, but also intractable conflicts, such as the long-running war in Afghanistan.

New Zealand’s partnership with the World Bank enables it to leverage not only its funds and advice on development but also its knowledge and capabilities for greater impact on poverty reduction and sustainable development worldwide.

Three opportunities

New Zealand has much to offer development beyond just money. I see three things:

- New Zealand has great experience it can share on reforms from the 1980s onwards to open its economy to the world and to make itself more competitive. Reforms are not easy and New Zealand has lessons to share on how regulations can be redrafted, institutions modernised, and government made more accountable to its people.

- New Zealand is today a well-governed and outward looking country and this is a lesson that many other countries can learn from. They can learn that even a small country being open to the world can benefit from attracting skilled workers to draw in innovation.

- New Zealand has had its own journey seeking to ensure that all members of its society win a share in prosperity. Building social inclusion is a huge challenge across the world and the perception of widening inequality is a cause for political instability. New Zealand has lessons to offer the world but can also learn from other countries and use this knowledge to improve its own social inclusion.

Sir Edmund saw helping those less fortunate as a moral duty and later in life described his building of schools and clinics as more worthwhile than his conquest of Everest and journeys to the poles. New Zealand has much to offer the world and can in turn learn much from the world. This can come with greater engagement in global development.
NON-DEMOCRATIC POLITICS: Authoritarianism, Dictatorship and Democratization

Author: Xavier Márquez

In the week this review was drafted, opposition political figures were in the news — and in strife — in countries as diverse as Venezuela, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Maldives (a tragic death), Uganda, Zambia, Turkey and Russia. Xavier Márquez’s Non-Democratic Politics makes sense of this pervasive phenomenon and deserves to be as widely read in New Zealand as in any place where people are interested and anxious about the fate of democracy in seemingly ‘dark times’.

Non-Democratic Politics has the form of a university text, with chapter introductions, subsections, conclusions and case studies presented in sometimes tantalising topic boxes: ‘constitutional parodies’; rituals of mourning and the personality cult in North Korea’. Márquez is a political scientist (at Victoria University) and draws extensively on social science statistical method to develop his arguments. This approach pushes at times against the practicality of treating the world’s very diverse polities as interchangeable (can useful generalisations be arrived at when China, Iraq and Tonga are units in the same data set?), but in fact Márquez at all times informs his findings with a sensitivity to historical specificities.

The subtitle — authoritarianism, dictatorship and democratization — provides a guide to the book’s content and structure, but for ‘non-democracy’ itself Márquez sensibly adapts Adam Przeworski’s no-nonsense even brutal definition: democracies are political systems in which parties — governments — can lose elections; by extension, non-democracies are those in which they cannot.

That binary is shaped by an important wrinkle, however. Márquez points out that ever since modern democracy’s advent more than 200 years ago it has shaped the forms of authoritarian rule. In recent times, this has meant multiparty elections, now the practice in more than 70 per cent of authoritarian regimes. Such ‘competitive authoritarianism’ captures the reality that ‘most authoritarian regimes [in recent times] do not look very different from democracies’. But — and it is a big but — opposition figures ‘compete against incumbents in a playing field that is neither free nor fair’.

Márquez’s book is not particularly normative or teleological though there is no mistaking his preference for democracy over its opposite. But three of its insights suggest empirical not normative reasons for cautious optimism about democracy.

First, Márquez explores ‘benevolent authoritarianism’. The eponymous chapter (nine) aptly opens with a quote from the late Lee Kuan Yew, long serving prime minister of Singapore. Is authoritarianism better than democracy at economic development? It is not an open and shut case: authoritarian regimes are over-represented among ‘growth miracles’, but they are also over-represented among ‘growth disasters’. Authoritarian regimes may be better at eluding rent-seeking politics. But democracies may be better at policy because individuals can speak their minds. Authoritarian regimes which ‘functionally reproduce (though in limited form) the mechanisms of accountability and information processing characteristic of democracies’ are the ones that do best. Singapore is, of course, a case in point; Márquez also instances the two Koreas through the 1970s and 1980s, when they were both authoritarian but when the South’s growth path diverged markedly from the North’s.

Second, Márquez broadly accepts the thesis that ‘economic development is strongly correlated with democratization’. China is ‘about as democratic today as its income per capita would predict’ (the massive urbanisation still ahead for China is often overlooked by commentators). It is possible (although Márquez does not directly address) that this would explain the political troubles of countries such as Turkey and Thailand, sometimes thought to be caught in a ‘middle income trap’. Singapore appears to buck the trend, with a per capita income far in advance of most democracies and scoring equally high on many human development indexes. Márquez does not delve into the Singapore case, but it may not be that much of an exception. Singapore has not emulated the democratic transitions of South Korea (1988) and Taiwan (1997). But an electoral process in which opposition parties could score around 40 per cent of the vote (in the 2011 general election) places it not as far from the ranks of full democracies as the People’s Action Party’s longstanding and as yet unchallenged monopoly on power might suggest.

The third insight stems directly from the existence, if hardly the flourishing, of opposition parties in competitive authoritarian regimes. Yes, as those opening examples attest, they are harassed.

Notes on reviewers
Dr Malcolm McKinnon is a Wellington historian and NZIIA honorary vice-president, and is a member of the editorial committee of the NZIR.
Dr Thitinan Pongsudhirak directs the Institute of Security and International Studies and teaches at the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. He held the Kippenberger chair for 2015 at the Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.
Dr John Moremon is an historian in the Centre for Defence and Security Studies, Massey University.
Dr Maria A. Pozza is a corporate solicitor at Lane Neave. Her specialist services include space law and policy, aviation and unmanned aerial vehicles law and technology law. She has also worked on humanitarian and human rights law.
But they also survive. And in certain cases — Márquez instances Romania — they have provided the pathways to substantive democracy.

Here is a question to end on: should the democratic world’s lobbying for individual human rights in non-democracies be eschewed in favour of, or complemented by, more vigorous lobbying for the rights of political parties and their leaders, on the grounds that if they are assured full democracy, and with it enhanced human rights, will be much more likely? Of course democracies need to stay the course too — but that is another book.

MALCOLM McKINNON

BILATERAL LEGACIES IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Editor: N. Ganesan
Published by: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2015, 208pp, US$29.90.

In retrospect, this collection of researched chapters on bilateral relations between bordering countries in East Asia was ahead of its time. Over the past two years since its publication, this volume appears more relevant, vindicated and applicable in analysing regional dynamics in East Asian international relations. It brings back the paramount role of history and geography as the time-less dictates of international relations through the lens of bilateral overhangs and legacies which are framed as ‘historical interactions… embedded in the psyche of a state, both at the level of the elites and the citizen body’. As N. Ganesan, the convenor and editor, puts it: ‘Consequently, history and geography combine to provide the most forceful evidence in favour of bilateralism’. In an era where multilateralism is languishing, the thrust of this book and its emphasis on bilateralism are instructive.

But, of course, this volume should be assessed on its own terms as conference papers that were finalised as a book publication in 2015. The line-up of chapters is not exhaustive. Apart from the conceptualisation aspects, key terms and definitions in the first chapter, bilateral ‘next-door’ relations between South Korea and Japan, Japan and China, China and Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand, and Thailand and Cambodia are featured as country chapters. A more comprehensive account would have included Japan and Russia on the ‘Northern Territories’, which is crucial in view of events such as Brexit and President Donald Trump’s populism and early protectionism. Powerful and durable bilateral legacies help us understand why global affairs will be more contentious. From this understanding, it is possible to draw policy implications that could renegotiate and revamp the world order as we have known it.

THITINAN PONGSUDHIRAK

NEW ZEALAND’S WESTERN FRONT CAMPAIGN

Author: Ian McGibbon

There is no doubt the centenary of the Great War of 1914–18 has rekindled interest in this ‘war to end all wars’. In New Zealand, the government’s WW100 programme has sought to generate public interest in ‘one of the most significant events of the 20th Century and [one that] had a deep and lingering impact on New Zealand society’. The greater challenge is to sustain that interest as ‘centenary fatigue’ creeps in. The series of commemorative events during 2014–19 (taking in the centenary of the Treaty of Versailles) will be forgotten, other than by academics studying the phenomenon of
remembrance. With the mid-point of the centenary having passed, it is a good time to be thinking about the legacy of WW100.

Ian McGibbon’s *New Zealand’s Western Front Campaign* forms part of the legacy. This book will be read for many years to come. It is one of several books to be published in the WW100 First World War Centenary History — a partnership between Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage (MCH), New Zealand Defence Force, Massey University and the Returned and Services Association.


*New Zealand’s Western Front Campaign* examines New Zealand’s contribution to the principal theatre of the war. While Gallipoli is most well remembered — it gave us ANZAC Day, after all — the New Zealand Division’s battle on the Western Front during 1916–18 was more significant strategically and more costly. There are more New Zealand war graves and names on memorials to the missing in France and Belgium than anywhere else in the world.

McGibbon is acutely aware of the importance of this experience. The book’s notes reveal impressive research, drawing on official and private papers in archives and libraries across New Zealand, Australia and Great Britain; newspapers; memoirs; and studies from New Zealand and international scholars. McGibbon has also walked the ground — and wrote a guide, *The Western Front: A Guide to New Zealand Battlefields and Memorials* (2015). He brings to this book scholarly and professional knowledge and commitment to blending narrative and analysis.

There is a brief introduction to the early years on the Western Front, and explanation of New Zealand’s contribution during 1914–15. The book then takes the reader from the arrival of the New Zealand Division in France into the trenches (with trench warfare explained) and on through successive campaigns. There are deviations, such as a chapter on airmen, which was not strictly necessary but gives the reader some understanding of New Zealanders who experienced the Western Front in a different fashion to infantrymen.

McGibbon stringently avoids talking up New Zealand’s contribution to the war. The New Zealand Division was, after all, one of 60 or so British Empire divisions on the Western Front. At times, though, one has to read between the lines to understand what he is getting at. In the chapter ‘Baptism of Fire’, McGibbon never quite explains that the New Zealanders were not highly regarded when they first went into the trenches in May 1916. They were placed in a ‘nursery’ sector to gain experience, but this is not quite apparent until McGibbon explains that ‘it was not until 3 July that they saw the true face of modern warfare’, when a bombardment fell on the division.

At the heart of this book is human experience and cost. McGibbon delivers up sound discussions of the battles waged by the New Zealand Division, but the reader is always reminded of the human experience. For example, a section on ‘coping’ is a reminder that ordinary men, once caught up in the slaughter of the Western Front, had to find ways of mentally getting through — at least until killed, wounded or captured.

McGibbon tackles some fellow historians, such as criticising one for a ‘startling claim, without adducing any evidence’ and another for giving credence to a major’s recollection that was 40 years after the event, which ‘greatly reduces its evidentiary value’. These instances of academic debate are positioned in the notes, and will therefore be missed by the majority of readers, but this adds to the book’s value: it is scholarly while keeping the general reader in mind.

This reviewer’s one big quibble concerns the book’s size, weight and cost. New Zealand publishers seem to have a taste for ‘big’ history books — particularly those supported by the MCH. This results in beautifully produced books, and the publisher of this particular book, David Bateman, is able to be proud of a book that includes some 408 pages on high-quality paper, over 100 photographs and artworks and very good maps. Editing is also first-rate. On the other hand, at $79.99 this book will be outside the budget of some potential buyers. Also, being quite large (pages about 20cm wide x 28cm deep) and heavy (close to 1.5 kilograms), it does not travel well (you will not be packing it into your carry on to read on the plane or bus) nor does it easily sit on most bookshelves. It is worth finding the space, but one cannot help wondering if a more modestly sized and priced book could have market appeal.

To have value, WW100 needs to leave a legacy. As McGibbon notes in his concluding passage, the Great War continues to have meaning, and in respect to the Western Front, ‘Now that all the participants in the war have died, and the passage of time has allowed a more detached assessment, the Western Front will assume its rightful place as the site of not only New Zealand’s most arduous and costly campaign but also perhaps its greatest military achievement.’ *New Zealand’s Western Front Campaign* is a fine legacy and it will be regarded as a key work for many years to come.

JOHN MOREMON

**PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS**

*Editors: Haidi Willmott, Ralph Mamiya, Scott Sheeran and Marc Weller*  
*Published by: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, 452pp, £70.*

This book adopts a holistic approach towards the concept of
civilians. Perhaps purposely, and in-light-of the impressive list of contributors, this book does not offer a streamlined definition of the protection of civilians, nor does it list the specific areas of international law which it seeks to discuss. Instead, the book is wide in scope and it is divided into three parts:

- Part one considers the roots of the issue associated with the protection of civilians, and in this way discusses ethical, conceptual, historical and theoretical paradigms in which the issue of the protection of civilians may arise;
- Part two considers the international legal framework which oversees the protection of civilians subject to the use of force, and also considers the conduct of hostilities, international humanitarian law and human rights law; and,
- Part three provides an overview of the protection of civilian in practice using the tools of diplomacy with attention to the politics surrounding, and practice of, applying international law in order to protect civilians.

Only selected chapters are considered within this review.

Part one begins with Hugo Slim's chapter on 'Civilian, Distinction and the Compassionate View of War'. This chapter is a must read for all practitioners and academics in this field of international law. It presents a digestible and focused introductory analysis on the topic of the protection of civilians during periods of war and how international law has responded historically.

This is followed by Scott Sheeran and Catherine Kent's contribution in the second chapter titled 'The Protection of Civilians, Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention: Conceptual and Normative Interactions'. The authors have succinctly and clearly illustrated the importance of the conceptual analysis adopted when considering the issues surrounding the responsibility to protect civilians, which ranges between humanitarian intervention, collective security, just war theory and the responsibility to protect among other important concepts.

Following on from this, chapter three by Ralph Mamiya 'A History and Conceptual Development of the Protection of Civilians' provides a good introductory overview of the important aspects concerning the conceptual foundation and development of the protection of civilians under international law and international relations/policy by utilising historical contextual analysis for illustrative purposes. This flows well into the Stian Kjesrud et al contribution in chapter four, which considers the 'Protection of Civilians: Comparing Organizational Approaches'. Analysis of the organisational approaches adopted by international institutions tasked with protecting civilians is offered drawing a comparison of the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, African Union and European Union.

Haidi Willmot concludes part one with the 'Evolution of the UN Collective Security System'. This chapter refers to the successes and failures of international law as it pertains to acts of aggression and further work which must be done at the collective security system level when states engage in conflict.

Part two of the book considers the legal framework as it applies to the protection of civilians with Andrew Clapham's opening chapter on the 'Protection of Civilians under International Human Rights Law'. The chapter certainly provides an excellent overview of the key areas of law within this scope. It points to fundamental parts of human rights law, which is a central pillar within the discussion of adequate protection over civilians during times of conflict.

Moan Ali Khalil on 'Legal Aspects of the Use of Force by the United Nations Peacekeepers for the Protection of Civilians' offers an analysis of the use of force taking into account criminal accountability, the basic principles of peacekeeping in the context of the use of force, and issues of self-defence among other areas of consideration such as the host states' duty.

Part three is by far the largest of the parts within the book and offers wide considerations of institutions such as the United Nations, African Union and Security Council. Jean-Marie Guéthenno considers the 'United Nation's Role in the Protection of Civilians' and provides an overview as to how the United Nations responds to the protection of civilians in times of conflict.

Ben Knob and Lydia Wambugu's contribution on the 'African Union and the Protection of Civilians' presents an important review of the work undertaken by the African Union when engaged in the protection of civilians. A good theoretical framework is implemented. It is informed by African politics and institutes such as the African Union's Peace and Security Council, Pan-African Parliament and African Court on Human and People's Rights among others.

Michael Keating and Richard Bennett's chapter on 'The Contribution of Human Rights to Protect People in Conflict' provides a comprehensive description of the practical elements surrounding the contribution of human rights law in relation to the protection of people in times of conflict, and will certainly leave the reader to conclude that there is much more work to be undertaken in this area of practice. In this vein, Sara Pantuliano and Eva Svoboda's chapter 'Humanitarian Protection — Moving Beyond the Tried and Tested' offers a new perspective on the operation of the international humanitarian legal framework.

Following on from this, Lise Grande considers 'The Problems and Dilemmas of Helping to Build Protection Capacities'. She explores the very real limits to the protection of civilians. This chapter lays an excellent framework to consider Haidi Willmot et al's final chapter in part three on the 'Community of Self-protection', which covers self-protection, from theoretical paradigms of humanitarian, peacekeeping and community approaches.

The book concludes by emphasising the importance of this topic and with the hopeful assertion that as more work is undertaken in this field, the protection of civilians will be further recognised as being at the heart of global peace and security.

MARIA A. POZZA
National Office and branch activities.

On 30 May the NZIIA joined with the European Union Delegation to New Zealand to host an address by Jean-Christophe Belliard, deputy secretary general of the European External Action Service, on 'Europe Today'. On the same day James Shaw MP, Green Party co-leader and spokesperson for climate change, finance and economic development, addressed a meeting at Parliament on 'Hope in the 21st Century'.

On 1 June the NZIIA joined Microsoft to host a breakfast meeting with Norm Judah, chief technology officer, Worldwide Services, Microsoft.

The NZIIA's National Council and Annual Dinner were held on the 21st, with Rt Hon Bill English as guest speaker at the latter. A full report on these events will be published in the September–October issue.

The leader of the Opposition, Andrew Little MP, addressed a meeting at Parliament on 28 June. His topic was 'New Zealand in a Changing World.' (The text of his address will be published in the next issue.)

**Auckland**

On 1 June the branch presented a film on the strategy of the Tokelau Islands for future energy needs, which was followed by a discussion with the film's director, Ulli Weissbach.

The following meetings were held:

- 21 Mar Joanna Mossop (Victoria University of Wellington), 'South China Sea Arbitration'.
- 10 May HE José Gerardo Traslosheros Hernández (Mexican ambassador), 'Mexico and New Zealand: Building Bridges in the Asia–Pacific'.
- 24 May Prof Elena Isayev (University of Exeter), 'The Impact of Refugees on Economic, Political and Social Circumstances in the European Union'.

**Christchurch**

The following meetings were held:

- 2 May Associate Prof Wang Dong (School of International Studies and executive deputy director of the Institute for China–US People to People Exchange at Peking University), 'Re-globalisation: When China Meets the World Again'.
- 22 May Prof Kevin Clements (National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago) and Associate Prof Peter Field (Department of History, University of Canterbury), 'Trump's First 100 Days in Office'.

**Hawke's Bay**

The following meetings were held:

- 2 May Prof Claire Robinson (pro vice-chancellor of Massey University Wellington), 'Brexit: Trump: Is This the End of the World?: Consequences for New Zealand.'
- 29 Jun Ken Aldred (a former branch chairman and an NZIIA life member), 'Global Politics: the Changing Landscape. Is the United Nations Still on the Map?'

**Nelson**

Sadly, Nelson chair Hugo Judd passed away on 2 May. His obituary is to be found elsewhere in this issue.

The following meetings were held:

- 25 May HE Bernard Savage (European Union ambassador to New Zealand), 'The European Union after Brexit'.

**Palmerston North**

On 3 May Dr James To, the senior adviser (research) at the Asia New Zealand Foundation, addressed a meeting on 'China's Soft Power in the Age of Trump'.

**Waikato**

The following meetings were held:

- 26 Apr Dr Ron Smith (research associate, Department of Political Science and Public Policy, Waikato University), 'Climate Change and the March of Science'.
- 13 Jun James Shaw MP, 'Hope in the 21st Century'.

**Wairarapa**

The following meetings were held:

- 19 Apr Brian Lynch (NZIIA Wellington branch chair), 'The Times They Are A-Changin': Trump, Brexit and All That; What Could it Mean for New Zealand's Hard-won Place in the Asia–Pacific?'
- 24 May Dr John Ryan McLane, 'The Great Death: The Course of the 1918 Spanish Influenza and the Global Preparations for the Next Pandemic'.
- 14 Jun Dr Manjeet Pardesi (senior lecturer, International Relations and an Asia research fellow at the Centre for Strategic Studies, VUW), 'The Evolution of the Sino-Indian Rivalry'.

**Wellington**

The following meetings were held:

- 12 May Annette Dixon (World Bank vice president for South Asia), in co-operation with the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council.
- 16 May HE Mario Alzugaray Rodriguez (Cuban ambassador), 'Reflections on Contemporary Cuban Foreign Policy and the Cuba–New Zealand Relationship'.
- 23 May Dr Fiona Barker and Dr Kate McMillan (senior lecturers in comparative politics and politics at VUW respectively), 'Populism in the 2017 French and New Zealand Elections'.
- 26 May Prof Ole Döring (Institute of Sinology/China Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany), 'Confucian Perspectives on Modern Medicine and Contemporary Chinese Politics' (in conjunction with the New Zealand China Friendship Society).
- 8 Jun Prof Ramesh Thakur (Australian National University), 'New Zealand Nuclear Weapon Free Legislation Thirty Years On — Is it Ready For Export?' This meeting was held jointly with the United Nations Association of New Zealand and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Wellington Section).
- 15 Jun Alister Crozier (New Zealand consul-general in Chengdu), 'Catching Up With Western China: New Diplomatic Challenge'. Along with VUW's New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre, the branch was associated with this meeting, which was jointly hosted by the Wellington branch of the New Zealand Chinese Friendship Society and the New Zealand China Association.
Early this year, members of the NZIIA were saddened to learn that Dame Laurie Salas had quietly passed away in the Wellington rest home in which she had resided for some years. Her death brought to a close her exemplary career as a tireless campaigner for peace, disarmament and women’s rights.

Born in Wellington but brought up in Christchurch, Laurie was educated at Fendalton, Rangi Ruru Girls School and Canterbury University College, where she studied for a BA in history and philosophy. She later studied medicine but, after marrying one of the medical students in 1946, Jack Salas — her first husband, Ian Webster, had died of blood poisoning in 1943 — she gave up her studies and concentrated instead on bringing up their six children.

Laurie was a member of a distinguished family. Her father, Sir James Hay, founded the department store chain Hays; a councillor and deputy mayor of Christchurch, he was knighted for services to the community. Her younger twin brothers, David and Hamish, were also both knighted; the former established the National Heart Foundation and the latter was a mayor of Christchurch.

Laurie always found time for involvement in community affairs, especially the Playcentre movement, which she represented on the National Council of Woman. She contributed much to numerous other non-governmental organisations, including the Mothers’ Helpers Committee, the Federation of University Women, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and the National Society for Alcoholism and Drug Addiction. Laurie was secretary of the National Council of Women from 1976 to 1980 and vice president from 1982 to 1986, and would later be made a life member.

Laurie was indefatigable in her opposition to war as a solution to international problems, an approach that was perhaps bolstered by the sacrifice her family had made in the First World War, with two uncles lost at Gallipoli. She was heavily involved in the United Nations Association of New Zealand, and served as its national president. ‘Now that we seem to moving towards a more peaceful world…’, she wrote in 1988, ‘I hope that people realise that we can perhaps do without war altogether. The more people who have faith in the UN and really support their respective governments, the more likely we will have the enduring peace the charter sets out to achieve.’ She became a vice-president of the World Federation of United Nations Associations and was active in the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific as a New Zealand committee member.

Laurie was active in the disarmament cause. In 1982 she represented New Zealand at the United Nations session on disarmament — the only non-government representative in the delegation — and at the Women of the World Working for Peace conference in New York. She served nine years on the public advisory committee for disarmament and arms control set up by the Labour government during the 1980s.

Laurie was a member of the NZIIA’s Standing Committee during the 1980s and was made an honorary vice-president when she stood down. She maintained an interest in the NZIIA’s work long after she ceased to have active involvement in its affairs, and was a regular attendee at meetings. Always courteous, ever smiling, she made a valuable contribution to the NZIIA’s work, whether with a telling point in a Standing Committee discussion or a well-crafted question to a speaker. Professor Ramesh Thakur spoke for many when he eulogised her at a meeting in Wellington in June:

Slight of frame, gentle by nature and softly spoken, Dame Laurie Salas was motivated by core inner convictions that gave her the strength and the resolution to maintain the rage and stay the course until victories were achieved. Her milestones of success are the many changes to New Zealand laws, policies and practices, whether modest or consequential….

Laurie should be a role model for all social and political activists, relying on persuasion and the power of ideas instead of angry denunciations and shouted accusations of moral turpitude. She gained universal respect by never being disrespectful, even to those with whom she disagreed most profoundly. Those who mistook her innate gentleness and politeness for weakness learnt to their cost that her determination not to compromise on core values and her will to triumph against the odds were indomitable….

Laurie was a companion of the Queen’s Service Order in 1982 and six years later a dame commander of the Order of the British Empire, both for community services.

Ian McGibbon
Hugo Judd’s death at Mapua in early May has deprived the NZIIA of one of its most effective supporters. He made a major contribution to the organisation by extending its profile into a region in which it had not hitherto been present. Not only did he play a key role in the formation of the Nelson branch but also, over the next six years, he helped build it into one of the NZIIA’s strongest and most active.

Born in Victoria, Canada in 1939, Hugo came to New Zealand with his family in 1946. He was educated at Cathedral Grammar School, Christ’s College and Canterbury University College, graduating with a BA in 1961; he then went to Oxford University, where he gained another BA in 1963, as well as winning a blue for gymnastics.

He joined the Department of External Affairs in 1964 and was back in Europe two years later as a junior diplomat in New Zealand’s Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. In 1968, he was sent from there to the New Zealand Embassy in Saigon. Back in Wellington in 1971, he spent the next three years in the now Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Economic Division. After a stint in Moscow as chargé d’affaires in New Zealand’s reopened post there in 1973–74, he had another head office role as director of administration from 1975 to 1978. He was then appointed minister in New Zealand’s Washington Embassy. From 1982 to 1985 he was New Zealand’s ambassador to Austria and Eastern Europe with accreditation in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Romania. In 1986 he became spokesman and an assistant secretary in the ministry, positions he held until his retirement from the diplomatic service in 1994. He then became official secretary to the governor-general, a role he performed for ten years before retiring and moving to Nelson.

In 1973 Hugo married Catherine Isaac, who in more recent times has been president of the ACT Party; they would have three sons. After they were divorced, he married Sue Morgan.

Hugo, who was made a commander of the Royal Victorian Order in 1995 and a companion of the Queen’s Service Order in 2008, was much admired by NZIIA members for his efforts to create the new branch in Nelson. His general bonhomie, energy and enthusiasm will be greatly missed.

Ian McGibbon
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