

## NZIIA Auckland Branch Report 2025

### Branch Office Holders:

Chairperson: Francesca Long

Vice Chairperson Dr. Rouben Azizian

Administrator: Jayden Sul

Treasurer: Jodi Johnston

Public Relations: Emily Watts

2025 was a successful year for the Auckland Branch with events spanning a large breadth of international affairs, from leading academics unpacking today's shifting geopolitical landscape and orders, to politicians and authors examining domestic policy and emerging technologies in warfare. Membership numbers also grew, reaching 82 paid members and 69 student members, a reflection of the branch's growing influence and relevance.

A highlight for our branch was welcoming Former President of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski, whose address was both timely and compelling given Europe's evolving security environment. It was truly an honour and great privilege to be able to hear from his address, with excellent and engaging questions from the audiences too. We would like to extend a special thanks to committee member and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in Auckland, Bogusław Nowak, for making this possible.

The branch also leaned into panel events this year, trialling a format where three to four speakers engage across a shared topic. Two standout events, one on the rise of global autocracy in partnership with the University of Auckland, and another on New Zealand's relationship with the Pacific in collaboration with the Pacific Cooperation Foundation, generated rich debate and strong audience engagement. We would like to thank everyone who collaborated with our branch, and we aim to continue fostering these and new relationships too. It has been a delight to see how our events drew a genuinely diverse crowd, students, policymakers, members of the diplomatic corps, and community members. Another memorable moment was seeing the Ukrainian community rally behind author Kyrylo Cyril Kutcher's presentation, reflecting the kind of community connection our events aim to continue fostering in different future events. Our goal remains to bring different corners of Auckland together, to network, to debate, and to strengthen New Zealand's connections with the world on the topics of international relations and trade.

Behind the scenes, the Chair and Vice-Chair worked actively to build new relationships and lock in exciting events for early 2026, with ambassadors and subject-matter experts already in the pipeline. We also made deliberate efforts to engage students interested in joining the future committee, with particular thanks to Dr. Rouben Azizian for his support in this area. As Chair, my aim is to hand over a committee that genuinely reflects Auckland's diversity in profession, background, and community ties to bring a larger variety of perspectives and events in the future.

None of this happens without a dedicated team. I would like to express my sincerest thanks to our office holders, Dr. Rouben Azizian for tirelessly advocating for our branch, Emily Watts promoting our events; Jayden Sul for administrative support; Sarah Fetuani for event coordination; and Jodi Johnston for keeping our finances in order. We also extend warm gratitude to Executive Director Hamish McDougall for his continued support of our branch.

The successful year and growth of the Auckland's Branch has been the result of collaborative engagement and help from each of our Branch's committee members. The committee is looking forward to evolving even more and working closer together in the upcoming year to provide even more variety of events and projects for our Auckland members and community.

## **2025 NZIIA Auckland Branch Events List**

19-Mar *New Zealand's International Futures: Security, economy, diplomacy* – Hon David Parker, Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Export Panel

20-Mar *New Zealand's Geopolitics and the US-China Competition* – Dr. Reuben Steff, Senior Lecturer of Geopolitics and International Relations, University of Waikato

30-May *NZIIA Auckland Branch AGM 2025 and Identify, Security and Geopolitics of post-Soviet Transcaucasia and Central Asia* – Dr. Rouben Azizian, Chairperson of Auckland Branch 2024

04-Jun *The Russia-Ukraine war: obstacles to negotiations and finding solutions* – Professor Lise Howard, Georgetown University

11-Jun *Poland and Europe amid global tensions and conflicts* – Aleksander Kwansniewski, Former Present of Poland

20-Oct *Rising global autocracy and its impact on New Zealand* – Associate Professor Chris Ogden, University of Auckland; Associate Professor Timothy Kuhner, University of Auckland; Associate Professor Maria Armoudian, University of Auckland; Professor Jennifer Curtin, University of Auckland

30-Oct *Closing the Connection Gap: New Zealanders, the Pacific, and Global Affairs* – Hon. Carmel Sepuloni, Member of NZ Parliament and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party; Mr Sione Tekiteki, Senior Lecturer of Faculty of Law, Auckland University of Technology; Sarah Fetunani, NZIIA Auckland committee member

05-Dec *Z Empire Unmasked – Russia's War of Aggression, Ukraine's Defence, and Lessons for New Zealand* – Kyrylo Cyril Kutcher, author and researcher