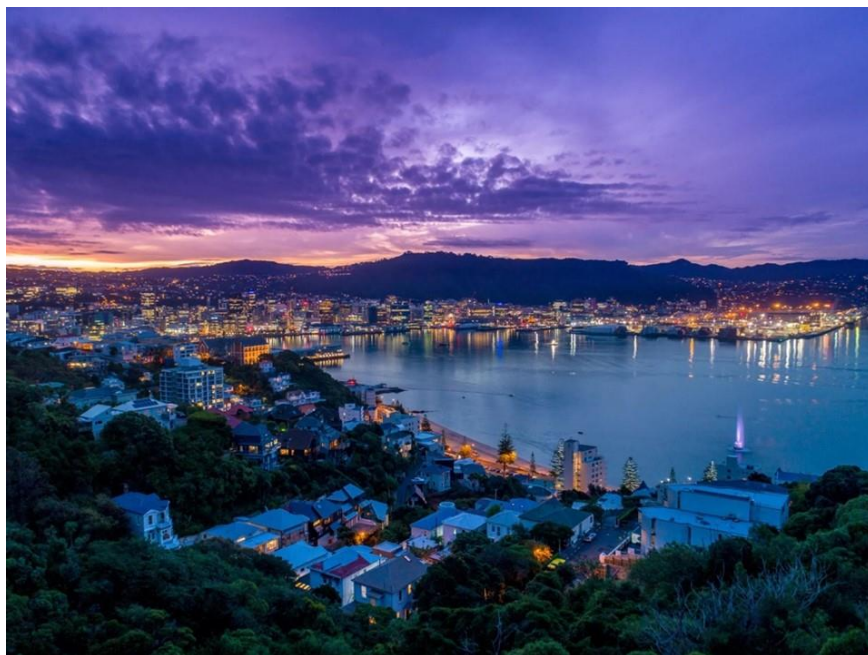


PACIFIC ISLANDS POLITICAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION (PIPSA) CONFERENCE

THE PACIFIC ISLANDS: ZONE OF PEACE OR OCEAN OF DISCONTENT?



Thursday and Friday 20-21 February 2025

9.00am to 5:30pm

33 Bunny Street, Pipitea

Victoria University of Wellington

Wellington, New Zealand

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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

PRE-CONFERENCE EVENTS (19 February)

16:00 – 17:00 REGISTRATION OPENS

RHLT2, Pipitea, Victoria University of Wellington

17:30 – 19:30 RECEPTION

The Banquet Hall, Parliament Buildings

Speaker: Rt Hon. Winston Peters, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Chair: David Capie, Director, Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand

CONFERENCE DAY 1 (20 February)

08:30 – 09:00 REGISTRATION

RHLT2, Pipitea, Victoria University of Wellington

09:00-10:00 PLENARY SESSION +KEYNOTE 1 NAVIGATING THE CURRENTS OF CHANGE: THE PACIFIC IN AN ERA OF GEOPOLITICAL FLUIDITY

Mihi Whakatau: Tu Temare, Te Kawa a Māui

Keynote speaker: Professor Transform Aqorau, Vice Chancellor, Solomon Islands National University

Introduced by Professor Nic Smith, Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University of Wellington

Chair: Jon Fraenkel, Professor of Comparative Politics, Victoria University of Wellington

RHLT2, Pipitea, Victoria University of Wellington

10:00-10:30 MORNING TEA (RHMZ Foyer)

10:30-12:00 SESSION 1: Panels 1a (RH102), 1b (RH103), 1c (RH104)

12:00-13:00 LUNCH (RHMZ Foyer)

13:00-14:30 SESSION 2: Panels 2a (RH102), 2b (RH103), 2c (RH104)

14:30-14:45 AFTERNOON TEA (RHMZ Foyer)

14:45-16:00 SESSION 3: Panels 3a (RH102), 3b (RH103), 3c (RH104), 3d (RHMZ01)

16:05-17:40 SESSION 4: Panels 4a (RH102), 4b (RH103), 4c (RH104), 4d (RHMZ01)

18:30 CONFERENCE DINNER at St John's Bar and Restaurant

CONFERENCE DAY 2 (21 February)

08:30-09:00	REGISTRATION RHLT2, Pipitea, Victoria University of Wellington
09:00-10:30	SESSION 5: Panels 5a (RH102), 5b (RH103), 5c (RH104), 5d (RHMZ01)
10:30-11:00	MORNING TEA (RHMZ Foyer)
11:00-12:00	PLENARY SESSION+KEYNOTE 2 POLITICS AND POWER IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS Speaker: Stephanie Lawson, PIPSA President RHLT2, Pipitea, Victoria University of Wellington Chair: Jon Fraenkel, Professor of Comparative Politics, Victoria University of Wellington
12:00-13:00	LUNCH (RHMZ Foyer)
13:00-14:15	SESSION 6: Panels 6a (RH102), 6b (RH103), 6c (RH104), 6d (RHMZ01)
14:15-14:30	AFTERNOON TEA (RHMZ Foyer)
14:30-15:45	SESSION 7: Panels 7a (RH102), 7b (RH103), 7c (RH104)
15:45-17:00	CLOSING PLENARY/GENERAL MEETING RHLT2, Pipitea, Victoria University of Wellington
17:30	FUNCTION at Thistle Inn

PIPSA25@VUW Detailed Program of Panels/Events

Wednesday 19 February

16:00-17:00 Registration

17:30-19:30 Reception: Welcome to PIPSA25@VUW with the Rt Hon. Winston Peters, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Thursday 20 February

8:30-9:00 Registration

9:00-10:00 Plenary + Keynote 1: Navigating the Currents of Change: The Pacific in an Era of Geopolitical Fluidity

Professor Transform Aqorau, (Vice Chancellor, Solomon Islands National University)

Introduced by Professor Nic Smith, Vice-Chancellor (Victoria University of Wellington)

Chair: Jon Fraenkel, (Professor of Comparative Politics, Victoria University of Wellington)

10:00-10:30 Morning Tea (RHMZ Foyer)

10:30-12:00 Session 1

Panel 1a Changing Geopolitics in Oceania (1) (RH102)

Chair: Terence Wesley-Smith

Sandra Tarte (USP), Confronting Geopolitics in Pacific Regional Diplomacy

Graeme Smith (ANU), China's Evolving Paradiplomacy in the Pacific

Iati Iati (VUW), New Zealand's Approach to China Since the Pacific Reset

Anna Powles (Massey), Obligations of Pacific Island States Under Bilateral Security Agreements in the Event of a Military Conflict in Asia

Panel 1b Perspectives on Gender, Regulation and Governance in the Pacific Chair (RH103)

Chair: Romitesh Kant (ANU)

Sheridan Rabbitt (Sunshine Coast), Enhancing Gender Inclusivity in Community Based Fisheries Management: Lessons from Morovo, Solomon Islands

Jennifer Corrin (UQ), Law and Same Sex Relations in Pacific Island Countries

Nicole George (UQ), In the Shadows of Parity: Gender, Conflict and the Masculinisation of Political Life in New Caledonia/Kanaky

Suliana Mone (Auckland), Law vs Culture: Women's Rights in Tonga

Panel 1c Historical and Contemporary Issues in Colonialism (RH104)

Chair: Lachlan McNamee (Monash)

David Manzano Cosano (Cadiz), The Creation of the "American Lake" in the Former Spanish Colonies in Oceania

Lorenz Gonschor (USP), A New "Spectre of Decolonisation": Non-Aligned Azerbaijan's Baku Initiative Group

Clémence Maillochon (Bretagne Occidentale), Transpacific Networks against Nuclear Testing: Artistic Resistance from French Polynesia and the Marshall Islands

Jay Evett, The Māori Renaissance, Identity Change, and Aotearoa's Pacific Diplomacy

12:00-13:00 Lunch (RHMZ Foyer)

13:00-14:30 Session 2

Panel 2a Changing Geopolitics in Oceania (2) (RH102)

Chair: Sandra Tarte (USP)

Terence Wesley-Smith (UH), Charming the Pacific? Changing US policy in Oceania

Henryk Szadziwski (UH), Look Who's Talking: Discourses in the United States on Oceania and Chinese Presence in the Pacific

Jessica Marinaccio (CSUDH), Taiwan's Role as an Extension of US and Australian Interests in the Pacific

Nic Maclellan (IB), Indo-Pacifique ou Pacifique Bleu: French Colonialism and Pacific Geopolitics

Panel 2b Colonisation/Decolonisation (RH103)

Chair: Michael Goldsmith (Waikato)

Lachlan McNamee (Monash), Who Wants to Decolonize? Evidence from Survey Data in the Pacific

Stephanie Lawson (Macquarie), Coloniality, Agency and Governance in Oceania: Perspectives on Independence and Constitution-Making

Federica Pieristè, (Sapienza), Politics on the plate. Recipes for decolonial eating from Aotearoa

Panel 2c Inclusive Peace Project: Possible Evolution in Power Sharing in New Caledonia (RH104)

Chair: Adrian Muckle (VUW)

Mathias Chauchat (UNC), An Overview of Power Sharing in New Caledonia and its Decolonisation Process

Anthony Tutugoro (UNC), How Do Actors Perceive Power Sharing and the Inclusion of Citizens in the Decision-Making Process in New Caledonia?

Jon Fraenkel (VUW), Power Sharing in the Pacific Islands and Beyond

14:30-14:45 Afternoon Tea (RHMZ Foyer)

14:45-16:00 Session 3

Panel 3a Changing Geopolitics in Oceania (3) (RH102)

Chair: Iati Iati (VUW)

Marco de Jong (AUT), A Securitising Bargain: AUKUS, New Zealand, and "Pacific-led Regional Security"

Henrietta McNeill (ANU), Changing Geopolitics in the Pacific Islands: Great Power Rivalry and Security Agreements

Fran Minchen Pan, Building Economic Ties Through Cultural Foreign Policy: New Zealand, Taiwan, and ANZTEC

Panel 3b Perspectives from Fiji (RH103)

Chair: Stephanie Lawson (Macquarie)

Jope Tarai (ANU), The Pacific Zone/Ocean of Peace – What Is It? What Does It Look Like From Within Fiji and Does It Matter In Regionalism?

Jon Fraenkel (VUW), Can There Be Constitutional Change in Fiji?

Mosmi Bhim (FNU), Political Military Reforms for Sustainable Democracy in Fiji

Panel 3c China and Taiwan in the Pacific (RH104)

Chair: Jason Young (VUW)

Xi Chen (East China Normal), Climate Governance and China-Pacific Island Countries Climate Cooperation

Lin Pu (ANU), A Geoeconomic Explanation of Chinese Training for Pacific Police

Cheng-Cheng Li (ANU), Anchoring Diplomacy in Reciprocity: Scholarship Programs in Palau-Taiwan Relations?

Panel 3d Roundtable: Navigating Culture: Comparative Perspectives and Practical Challenges (RHMZ01)

Chair: Wanda Ieremia-Allen (Auckland Museum)

Sau'i'a Louise Mataia Milo (NUS)

Hai-Yuean Tualima (VUW)

George Carter (ANU)

16:05-17:40 Session 4

Panel 4a French Engagement in a Changing Ocean (RH102)

Chair: Adrian Muckle (VUW)

Raihaamana Tevahitua (ANU), Australia-France-New Caledonia: Disentangling the Trilateral Relationship

Marvin Girelli (UFP), France's First Approach to the Indo-Pacific: From 2017 Ambition to 2021 Reality.

Clara Fillipi (UC de Louvain), Between Colonial Past and Common Destiny: shadows and light for New Caledonia

Sophie Hamel (Paris), The Development of Internet Networks in the Pacific islands: A Geopolitically Contested Space

Panel 4b Relationality in Pacific Politics (RH103)

Chair: Kerry Baker (ANU)

Discussant: Caitlin Mollica (Newcastle)

Theresa Meki (ANU), Haus Krai: National Symbol for Grief, Outcry, and a Melanesian Space for Diplomacy

Priestley Habru, (Adelaide) Understanding Pacific Political Governance through Public Diplomacy

Mercy Masta (ANU), Redefining Australia's Relationship with PNG: Challenging Historical Narratives and Embracing Regional Dynamics

Romitesh Kant (ANU), Ties that Bind: Exploring Relationality in Fijian Political Masculinities: Methodological Insights from the Field

Panel 4c The Rules-Based Order, Criminal Deportation, Statelessness and Strategic Competition (RH104)

Chair: Solstice Middleby (Adelaide)

Sione Tekiteki (AUT) and Joel Nilon, Reimagining the Rules Based Order from a Blue Pacific Perspective

Henrietta McNeill, The International Implications of Criminal Deportations to the Pacific Islands

Julija Sardelić (VUW), Statelessness Reconfigured: Responses to Emerging Statelessness Risk in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific Region

Piotr Topór ((Jagiellonian), Beyond Realist and Dependency Analyses: The Nexus of Strategic Competition, Regional Networking, and Norm Creation in the Pacific Region

Panel 4d Roundtable: Political Instability in the Pacific (RHMZ01)

Chair: Jon Fraenkel (VUW)

Anthony Tutugoro (UNC), Difficulties of Peacemaking after the May 2024 Insurrection in New Caledonia

Lopeti Senituli (Legal practitioner, Nuku'alofa), The Influence of the Monarchy on Government Change in Tonga

Anna Naupa (ANU), Vanuatu's January 2025 Snap Election

Iati Iati (VUW), Triggers and Repercussions of Schisms in the Ruling FAST Party in Sāmoa

18:30 Conference Dinner (St Johns, 5 Cable Street, Te Aro, Wellington 6011, New Zealand)

Friday 21 February

8:30-9:00 Registration

9:00-10:30 Session 5

Panel 5a Diplomacy, Regionalism, Media (RH102)

Chair: Stephen Levine

Anna Naupa (ANU), Vernacular Diplomacy in Great Power Rivalry: The Case of Vanuatu.

Grant Wyeth (AP4D), Supporting Pacific Regionalism

Solstice Middleby (Adelaide), Regionalism or Regionalism

Panel 5b Gender, Sexuality, Religion (RH103)

Chair: Nicole George (UQ)

Lauren Taijeron (UH), Practicing Expansive Definitions of Guinaiya: Anthology on Love, Land, Queerness, and Abolition

Kylie Noelani Skye Akiona (UH), E Ho‘ohali‘a, Remembering Native Hawaiian Visions of Pu‘uhonua

Domenica Gisella Calabrò (USP), Romitesh Kant (ANU), Jasbant Kaur (USP), Sidhant Maharaj (Fiji), Behind the Mask: Intersection (In)visibility Of Indo-Fijian Queer Experiences

Panel 5c Diplomacy and Foreign Policy (RH104)

Chair: Caitlin Mollica (Newcastle)

William Waqavakatonga (Adelaide), What Kind of Foreign Policy Do Pacific States Need in This Era of ‘Polycrisis’?

Liam Moore (James Cook), A Bad Neighbour, An Isolated Island: Why Australia Wants to Believe It ‘Controls’ The Pacific

George Carter (ANU), ‘Oceanic Diplomacy for Peace’

Panel 5d Media, Memory and Knowledge (RHMZ01)

Heather Wrathall (AP4D), Pacific Youth, Civil Society and Media (presented by Grant Wyeth)

Gabrielle Langkilde, Pasefika Presence: Magazines as a Space for Dreaming Through Stories

Opeta Alefaio (ANU), Knowing Thyself: The Role of Memory and Knowledge in Achieving Pacific Goals

10:30-11:00 Morning Tea (RHMZ Foyer)

11:00-12:00 Plenary + Keynote 2: Politics and Power in the Pacific

Stephanie Lawson (Macquarie), PIPSA President, Politics and Power in the Pacific

Chair: Jon Fraenkel (VUW)

12:00-13:00 Lunch (RHMZ Foyer)

13:00-14:15 Session 6

Panel 6a Environment, Conservation and Disaster Management (RH102)

Chair: Terence Wood (VUW)

Luke James (Deakin), World Heritage in the Pacific Islands: Contact Zones of Conservation, Cooperation and Contestation

Yan Wu (Guangdong Univ. of Foreign Studies), The Current Status and Prospects of Cooperation in Disaster Reduction and Prevention Between China and Pacific Island Countries

Litia Vea-Simpson (Massey), Indigenous Resilience and Self-Determination for Sustainable Transition: A Model for Pacific SIDS

Panel 6b Peace, Security and Environmental Legacies (RH103)

Chair: Lorenz Gonschor (USP)

Kenji Cataldo (UH), Makua, Piko of Peace: Media, Mo‘olelo, and Militarism in Occupied Hawai‘i

Teremoana Matepi (ANU), Provoking Values of Peace for Security in Oceania

Michelle Kawēlauokealoha Wright (UH), Lahainā Wildfires and Disappearing Waikīkī: The Mechanics of Settler-Induced Shoreline Catastrophes

Panel 6c Perspectives from PNG (RH104)

Chair: Marion Crawshaw (VUW)

Michael Kabuni (ANU), The Role of Local Context in Transnational Regimes: AML in PNG

James Reid Stiefvater (Massey), Otonomi bilong wanem? Autonomy for What?: The Interfaces of Identity, Development, and Decentralisation in Papua New Guinea

Benjamin Reilly (E-W Centre), Sports Diplomacy or Geopolitics? Papua New Guinea's National Rugby League bid.

Maholopa Laveil (UPNG), Trends in Party Politics in PNG

Panel 6d Roundtable: The Rise of Defence Diplomacy in the Pacific (RHMZ01)

Chair: David Capie (Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand)

Anna Powles (Massey)

Tess Newton Cain (Griffith)

Teddy Win (James Cook)

14:15-14:30 Afternoon Tea (RHMZ Foyer)

14:30-15:45 Session 7

Panel 7a Paradoxes in Geopolitics and Political Economy (RH102)

Chair: Sione Tekiteki

Lili Song (Otago), Chagos in the South Pacific? The Principle of Self-Determination and the France-Vanuatu Dispute over the Matthew and Hunter Islands

Elise Barandon (Paris), The Oceanian Paradox? Conceptualising the “Ocean of Peace” in an Ever-Militarizing region

Philippa Louey (ANU), When Promises of Transformation are Anything But: Learnings from the Blue Economy in Oceania

Panel 7b Roundtable: Postcolonial Relationships as Seen from the Islands (RH103)

Chair: Julija Sardelić (VUW),

Anita French, Norfolk Island

Tina Newport, Cook Islands

Gerard Prinsen, Aotearoa New Zealand

Panel 7c Roundtable: Geo-Strategic Rivalry in the Pacific in the Age of Trump II (RH104)

Chair: Jon Fraenkel (VUW)

Tessie Lambourne (Leader of the Opposition, Kiribati),

Transform Aqorau (Vice Chancellor, Solomon Islands National Univ.)

Kaliopate Tavola (Foreign Minister Fiji, 2001-6)

Graeme Smith (ANU)

**15:45-17:00 Closing Plenary/General Meeting Theme: Political Studies in the Pacific Islands:
The Way Forward (RH1T2)**

17:30 Function at Thistle Inn

End of Formal Program

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Authors and Abstracts



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Keynote Speaker

Transform Aqorau



Dr Transform Aqorau was the first Pacific Islander appointed as Legal Counsel and later Deputy Director General of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, serving for 11 years. From 2010 to 2017, he established the Parties to the Nauru Agreement Office in the Marshall Islands and launched the Purse Seine and Longline Vessel Day Scheme (VDS), the world's largest and most complex fisheries management system. Under his leadership, the VDS boosted economic returns from US\$60 million in 2010 to US\$500 million by 2017, marking a transformative achievement in fisheries management.

Stephanie Lawson



Stephanie Lawson is Professor of Politics and International Relations at Macquarie University, Sydney and Senior Research Associate, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg. She has previously held teaching and research positions at the University of New England, the Australian National University, the University of East Anglia, and the University of Birmingham. She is a past president of the Australian Political Studies Association and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. She is also the current President of the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association. Her publications span the fields of comparative and international politics, normative theory, and Asia-Pacific studies on issues ranging from nationalism and ethnic politics to the theorization of democracy and human rights in cross-cultural settings. She has written extensively on politics in Fiji and the Southwest Pacific more generally.

Session 1

Panel 1a Changing Geopolitics in Oceania (1)

The return of great power competition represents the greatest challenge to regional order in Oceania since the end of the Cold War—and a key factor in Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka's vision of the region as a zone of peace. This geopolitics stream (consisting of 4 panel sessions) will include analysis of the changing dynamics of China's rise in the region, Western attempts to curtail Beijing's influence, and the implications of these developments for Pacific Island nations and peoples. There will be particular emphasis on regional attempts to resist, manage, or leverage growing external entanglements.¹

Terence Wesley-Smith (Chair), UH

Sandra Tarte

Confronting Geopolitics in Pacific Regional Diplomacy

This paper examines how great power politics has intersected with Pacific regional diplomacy over the last two decades. It describes three distinct phases where evolving geopolitical dynamics have impacted on Pacific island states' agency and assertions of self-determination. In each of these periods there has been a dominant framing of geopolitics by regional leaders: first as opportunity, then as distraction and now, increasingly, as threat. This third period coincides with growing tensions between China and the region's traditional partners. External power engagement with the region is increasingly motivated by strategic calculations of power, access and influence. The ability of Pacific island states to collectively respond to this challenge requires regional cohesion and national resilience, both of which have been tested in recent times. This paper explores avenues where Pacific island states are collectively or individually seeking to shape the region's peace and security agenda. It assesses the prospects for not only confronting but also mitigating the negative effects of great power politics in the Pacific.

Sandra Tarte is Associate Professor and acting Head of the School of Law and Social Sciences, University of the South Pacific (USP). She has worked at USP for almost three decades and held various roles including Director of the Politics and International Affairs programme. Sandra specializes in the international politics of the Pacific islands region.

Graeme Smith

China's Evolving Paradiplomacy in the Pacific

Studies of diplomacy by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Pacific tend to focus on central state actors—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, and central state-owned enterprises. Such a focus is understandable in a time of geopolitical tension, and under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the Chinese state likes to convey the impression that the central party leads everything. Considerably less attention has been paid to the growing role of paradiplomacy—diplomacy carried out by subnational actors. Paradiplomacy covers a broad range of informal and formal activities—from the signing of sister city and sister province agreements, the influence of provincial state-owned enterprises, to engagement with ethnic Chinese business and cultural associations based in Pacific countries. While Guangdong province is charged with managing China's relations with the Pacific, this paper will also focus on two other eastern seaboard provinces—Shandong and Fujian—that have been active in engaging with the region. This paper will examine the extent of these arrangements,

¹ 8 of the 14 participants are early career researchers, post-graduate students, or of Pacific Islander heritage.

what results from them, and the historical and current motivations for PRC subnational actors to engage with the Pacific.

Graeme Smith is Associate Professor and senior fellow at the Australian National University's Department of Pacific Affairs. His research explores PRC investment, migration, aid, crime, and extraterritoriality in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. He is the co-author of *The China Alternative: Changing Regional Order in the Pacific Islands* (ANU Press). His work is published in *The Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Pacific Affairs* and *The China Journal*. He is the winner of best article prizes in *The Journal of Pacific History* and *The China Quarterly*. He co-hosts the awarding-winning *Little Red Podcast*, edits *The China Story*, and also has a doctorate in inorganic chemistry.

Iati Iati

New Zealand's Approach to China since the Pacific Reset

Until 2017, New Zealand's approach to China followed a familiar pattern. The strong trading relationship between the two, encouraged and facilitated by several "firsts", meant New Zealand remained largely neutral as competition between China and the United States led Western allies intensified. Surprisingly, even Winston Peters, then New Zealand foreign minister was reticent in adopting and deploying "Indo-Pacific" rhetoric that would signal support for Western efforts to counter China. But this situation quickly changed, and with the 2018 launch of the Pacific Reset, New Zealand made its intentions clear: it was a Western-aligned country whose security ties with its traditional partners were more important than its economic and trade ties with China. A subsequent change of government and foreign minister did not change this trajectory, despite initial efforts by the latter to restore some balance. As part of a coalition government, elected in 2023, Mr Peters has regained his foreign policy portfolio. It comes at a time when critical issues such as whether New Zealand should join AUKUS, considered an anti-China defacto alliance, is a hot topic. In this paper, I examine key foreign and defence policy documents, and other forms of government communication to identify patterns of behaviour towards China post-2017. In particular, I critically analyse how these frame China in relation to key issues, such as "militarization" of the Pacific, "debt diplomacy" and "economic coercion".

Iati Iati is a Senior Lecturer in the Politics and International Relations Programme, and Pacific Security Fellow in the Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.

Anna Powles

Obligations of Pacific Island States Under Bilateral Security Agreements in the Event of a Military Conflict in Asia

Over the past three years, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji have entered into bilateral security and defence agreements with external partners which, in the case of Papua New Guinea and Fiji, implicitly oblige them to provide support to U.S. forces in the event of military conflict in Asia. Elsewhere in the Pacific agreements (such as the Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union 2024) have been signed between Pacific countries and external partners which include national security obligations. The motivations behind these agreements are twofold: external partners are seeking to secure support from allies and partners in the Pacific as strategic competition intensifies; Pacific countries view the agreements, several of which include security assistance, as an opportunity to enhance their national security capabilities. What is less clear, however, is how these agreements align with the foreign policy positions, such as non-alignment and friends to all, and national security interests of the Pacific signatories. Furthermore, given the implicit obligations in a number of these agreements, this research

also examines how external partners view the obligations of Pacific signatories. This paper will present preliminary research findings drawn from conversations and interviews in Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji with regional leaders and officials since late 2024.

Anna Powles is an Associate Professor with the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at Massey University in Aotearoa New Zealand. Her research focuses on Pacific geopolitics and security, and New Zealand foreign and defence policy. Her current projects include co-lead of the Defence Diplomacy in the Pacific project, the first study to map and evaluate defence activities across five Pacific countries; an Australian Research Council project on the Australia-New Zealand alliance in the Pacific; and a NATO sponsored book on private military and security companies in Pacific and Asia.

Panel 1b Perspectives on Gender, Regulation and Governance in the Pacific Chair

This panel brings together four papers that examine where and how gender is shaped by, and implicated in, systems of governance and regulation in the Pacific region. While we document efforts to promote gender equality innovations, our papers also reflect on the fragility of reforms that challenge gender discrimination and the disturbing insistence of gendered disparity. Our papers discuss efforts to enhance women's agency in fisheries management, the amplification of gender disparities in conflict affected settings, the governance and regulation of same sex sexuality, and the challenges of localising international anti-discrimination law in Pacific settings.

Romitesh Kant (Chair), ANU

Sheridan Rabbitt

Enhancing Gender inclusivity in Community based Fisheries management: Lessons from Morovo, Solomon Islands

Community-based fisheries management (CBFM) is a standard management framework in Melanesia. Yet, there is increasing evidence that women, among other marginalised groups, experience barriers to inclusion in decision-making processes. Through a case study in three communities in Marovo Lagoon, Solomon Islands, we adapted Bina Agarwal's 2001 participation typology for a Melanesian CBFM context to present a participation model for assessing gender inclusivity in CBFM. Our results show that gender parity, that is equal representation of women and men, is not a reliable indicator of gender equity, and that women's engagement in CBFM decision-making varies significantly between communities, even in close proximity. We anticipate the model will be broadly useful throughout Melanesia across different cultural contexts, though aspects will need be adapted in different contexts both within and beyond Solomon Islands. We provide recommendations for fisheries practitioners who wish to improve women's inclusivity in CBFM by engaging with gender power structures.

Sheridan Rabbitt is a marine social scientist who researches ways to improve women's engagement within community-based marine resource management, disaster preparedness, and environmental planning processes. She is currently Manager of the Australian Centre for Pacific Islands Research, and has worked extensively with local communities, NGOs, and government staff in Solomon Islands over the past eight years.

Jennifer Corrin

Law and Same Sex Relations in Pacific Island Countries

The recent controversy over the appointment of, Malcolm Bishop KC, an openly gay British barrister, to the position of Lord Chief Justice of Tonga has put the country's laws governing same-sex relations

under scrutiny. Same-sex sexual relations are criminalised in Tonga even where they occur in private between consenting adults. Tonga is not the only Pacific Island country where same-sex sexual activity is against the law. The Cook Islands, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu all have similar legislation. Those in a same-sex relationship are also discriminated against by other aspects of the law. Commencing with a brief outline of the relevant constitutional provisions, this paper discusses the current laws on same-sex relationships in Pacific Island countries both in a criminal and civil context.

Jennifer Corrin is Professor Emerita at UQ and an Honorary Professor at the University of Sydney. Before moving to Queensland, Jennifer spent ten years in her own legal firm in Solomon Islands and five years at the University of the South Pacific. Her current research focuses on law reform and development in plural legal regimes and legal issues affecting small states. Her latest publication is the co-edited book, *Legal Systems of the Pacific: Introducing Sixteen Gems*.

Nicole George

In the Shadows of Parity: Gender, Conflict and the Masculinisation of Political Life in New Caledonia/Kanaky

Since May 2024, violent unrest has flared in New Caledonia/Kanaky resulting in the widespread destruction of infrastructure, disruption to public services and the loss of 13 lives. Calls for dialogue have been issued from political leaders within the territory and from the French government. Yet peacebuilding efforts have, to date, been predominantly focussed on the restoration of order through the use of force; there are currently more than 6000 police and military forces currently stationed in the territory which has a population of just 270,000. This paper investigates the ways in which these deployments are understood and experienced by women in the territory. Their testimonies reflect on the failure of women's voices to be heard since the current crisis began, the increasing masculinisation of political life in the troubled territory more generally, and ultimately, a frustration that the commitments to "rebalancing" captured in the language of the Noumea Accords of 1998 have produced few long-term benefits to women.

Since the early 2000s, Nicole has conducted research in the Pacific Islands region focusing on gender politics, gendered security and post conflict transition in Fiji, New Caledonia, Bougainville and Solomon Islands. She has a new book titled *Between Rights and Rightfulness: Regulating Gender Violence in the Pacific Islands* forthcoming with Oxford University Press in 2025.

Suliana Mone

Law vs Culture: Women's Rights in Tonga

Tonga is one of only one of seven countries that have yet to ratify CEDAW. In 2017, the Tongan public, a majority of whom were women, protested the government's ill-fated attempt to ratify the Convention. Efforts to ratify the Convention and implement equality for women in Tonga seriously threatened the then Prime Minister Akilisi Pohiva's place in Tongan politics. Tonga's CEDAW saga is extraordinary for many reasons. The most significant being that while women are held in high regard and status in Tongan society, according to Tongan custom, there is public protest and opposition to an international instrument that would codify customary female elevation, including from women themselves. This paper will explore the reasons for this potent discord between Tongan law and culture and offer insights to an important and contemporary issue for one of the Pacific's most unique nations.

Suliana Mone is from the villages of Folaha and Fua'amotu in Tonga, where she was raised. She is currently a lecturer at Auckland Law School. Her areas of interest and research revolve around the

interface between human rights standards, law, culture, custom, religion and politics in Pacific nations.

Panel 1c Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Colonialism

Lachlan McNamee (Chair), Monash

David MANZANO COSANO

The Creation of the “American Lake” in the Former Spanish Colonies in Oceania

Spain participated in the colonization of Oceania. This country occupied the Mariana and Caroline Islands in the Micronesia area. Currently, the US military controls these islands and international analysts call the region an “American lake.” The American force has adapted to the heterogeneous characteristics of its political entities, whose political status is unique in Public International Law because there are sovereign States with a Compact of Free Association, Commonwealth, and a Non-self-Governing Territory. This article explores the process of construction of these entities to observe the degree of survival of the characteristics of the Spanish Empire in the region.

David Manzano Cosano - david.manzano@uca.es / oceaniahispana@gmail.com [personal], Ramón y Cajal Researcher at the University of Cádiz (Department of Modern, Contemporary, American, and Art History). Ph.D. in Contemporary History (2015) and Ph.D. in Law and Political Sciences (2023). Specialist in History of the International Relations of Oceania, His is the author of the book *The Spanish Empire in Oceania* (Almuzara, 2020 in Spanish) and co-author of *Exploring Iberian Counterpoints in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Pacific* (Routledge, 2024).

Lorenz Gonschor

A New “Spectre of Decolonisation”: Non-Aligned Azerbaijan’s Baku Initiative Group

A new spectre is haunting European Imperialists: The spectre of Decolonisation, spearheaded by a small but vocal non-aligned country, Azerbaijan. Europe’s old powers have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre, or at least two of them, France and the Netherlands. Although Oceania and the Caribbean are the least decolonized world regions, with significant parts of both regions still under foreign rule, international support for liberation movements in colonial territories has been fading over the last decades, with many neighbouring countries preferring arrangements with colonial powers over solidarity with colonised peoples. Strong support from outside powers is thus most welcome, and Azerbaijan has become a surprising strong ally, virtually out of nowhere, when it founded the Baku Initiative Group (BIG) in 2023 during its tenure as the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (2019-2024). Similar to the hysteria surrounding the strong anticolonial actions of Libya’s Mathaba network of the 1980s, European governments and mainstream press organs have reacted to the BIG with virulent hostility, complaining about Azeri “interference” in regions thousands of kilometres away from Baku such as Kanaky-New Caledonia and Mā’ohi Nui (French Polynesia), not even seeing the irony in using such an argument to defend their own ongoing colonial interference in territories just as distant from themselves. Compared to the usual dismissal of anticolonial movements, this hysteria is arguably evidence of a certain amount of success of the BIG in challenging European colonialism. Similar to older political “spectres,” the haunting of colonised parts of Oceania by the “spectre” of the BIG is simultaneously articulating legitimate discontent and contributing to envisioning a fully decolonised Ocean of Peace. Within this framework of thought, my paper will examine and analyse the BIG and explore its wider geopolitical implications.

Lorenz Gonschor is a senior lecturer in politics and international affairs at the University of the South Pacific in Suva. With a PhD from the University of Hawai‘i (2016), Gonschor’s research focuses on regionalism and decolonisation in Oceania, both historically and contemporary.

Clémence Maillochon

Transpacific Networks against Nuclear Testing: Artistic Resistance from French Polynesia and the Marshall Islands

During the Cold War, the promotion of a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific was central in activists’ networks, such as Trade Unions, Churches or the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement. After the United States and France tested nuclear bombs in the Pacific, discontent voices were also raised among Indigenous artists engaged in the 1970s cultural renewal movement and nowadays, from ones involved in the climate movement.

The atolls of Bikini, Enewetak, Fangataufa and Moruroa are now nuclear waste storage sites vulnerable to rising oceans. The artistic dimension of protests from French Polynesia and the Marshall Islands gives visibility to this type of oceanic waste and the violence it has left within Indigenous societies. Concerns about nuclear pollution are currently underlined by the ‘Cape Farewell project’, a group of artists who sailed to Bikini and Enewetak in 2023, including Marshallese activist and poet Kathy Jetnil Kijiner or Bikinian navigator Alson Kelen. In French Polynesia, the creation of a ‘nuclear testing memory center’ is ongoing, while the teaching of the ‘fait nucléaire’ is now included in school curricula, and teachers sometimes use antinuclear art as support to study this topic.

In order to underline the importance of arts in the Pacific antinuclear movement, I will question the role of artists who bridged antinuclear communities through the Pacific. This paper will be using unexplored sources such as recently declassified French nuclear archives from Paris (Service Historique de la Défense) and testimonies of artists and activists from French Polynesia and the Marshall Islands that I collected since 2021.

Dr. Clémence Maillochon is a postdoctoral researcher at l’Université de Bretagne Occidentale. Her work focuses on the history of French nuclear testing. She recently published articles on the transnational dimension of the antinuclear movement in the *Journal of Pacific History* and on nuclear colonialism in the Sahara in the *International Review of Environmental History*.

Session 2

Panel 2a Changing Geopolitics in Oceania (2)

Sandra Tarte (Chair), USP

Terence Wesley-Smith

Charming the Pacific? Changing US Policy in Oceania

US interest in the Pacific has increased dramatically as Washington seeks to counter Beijing’s inroads in the region. Under Biden, diplomatic outreach has been ramped up, significant fisheries and security deals negotiated, and an ambitious agenda launched to address key aspects of the Forum’s 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Yet Washington has struggled to deliver on its promises, and concern remains about its long-term commitment—especially given the uncertainty surrounding the 2024 presidential election.

Despite talk of the US as somehow part of the “Pacific family,” I will argue that recent US policy towards the region, culminating in Biden’s 2022 Pacific Partnership Strategy, has to be understood as an integral part of the wider Indo-Pacific Strategy launched at the end of the Trump presidency. As such, it is animated by a strategic imperative not only to contain a rising China but to limit Beijing’s ability to undermine US preeminence on the global stage. Since neither of these fundamental objectives are shared by most island leaders, the potential for meaningful partnership is quite limited. Meanwhile increasing strategic competition has spawned unwelcome developments like deepening militarization, decreased security, and threats to the region’s nuclear-free status. Furthermore, various initiatives to coordinate Western anti-China efforts operate in the Pacific but beyond the purview of regional institutions constructed to manage engagement with external powers.

I will argue that the anti-China substance of US policy towards the Pacific is unlikely to change whichever party enters office in January 2025. Both are likely to remain committed to a strengthened Indo-Pacific Strategy with its emphasis on military deterrence. But a Harris administration would deploy a more nuanced approach to regional relations, in sharp contrast to Trump’s more transactional style and suspicion of international organizations—including those attempting to address the key issue for the region, that of climate change.

Terence Wesley-Smith is professor emeritus with the Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. He is a former director of the Center, and former editor of *The Contemporary Pacific*. He is the editor (with Graeme Smith) of *The China Alternative: Changing Regional Order in the Pacific Islands* (ANU Press 2021).

Henryk Szadziwski

Look Who’s Talking: Discourses in the United States on Oceania and Chinese presence in the Pacific

Since 2006, there has been a significant growth in bilateral relations between the People’s Republic of China and Pacific Island Countries. This expansion encompasses various sectors, including aid, trade, investment, security, media, education, and culture. As a response to China’s increasing commercial and security presence in the region, governments across the Asia-Pacific have adopted policies of (re)engagement with Oceania, including the United States, which introduced its Pacific Pledge in October 2019 and Pacific Partnership Strategy in September 2022.

The US distinguishes its policy approach to Oceania from China’s by aligning with the Pacific Islands Forum’s 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, as well as by claiming to listen to Pacific voices from political leaders to community representatives. This paper examines the latter claim by conducting a text analysis of influencers in the United States’ policy environment, media and think tanks, and their knowledge production concerning China’s presence in Oceania. Text analyses are invaluable in understanding the interplay “between discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities)” (Fairclough 2013). Consequently, the research examines which voices have been privileged in US policy discourse since 2019.

Further, discursive contexts in which “China and the homogenized Chinese people are represented as operating in an alien moral universe” (Sullivan and Renz 2012) give the impression that US interest in Oceania is not only competitive, but also self-serving. Therefore, this paper also assesses the dominant narratives and claims made by US media and think tanks regarding China’s presence in the Pacific since 2019.

Dr. Henryk Szadziwski is an Affiliate at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. His research interests include grounded and discourse analyses of Oceania’s globalism, particularly regarding China and the United States. Henryk’s work is published in *Political*

Jessica Marinaccio

Taiwan's Role as an Extension of US and Australian Interests in the Pacific

Given China's rise in the Pacific, much has been written about its competition with Taiwan over diplomatic recognition and the role this has played in piquing China's interest in Pacific regional affairs. As China and Taiwan have "fought" over diplomatic allies in the region, China has progressively gained the upper hand given its command of superior resources. Despite Taiwan's dwindling official allies, however, its increasingly strong relationships with non-allies like the United States have caused commentators to question whether Taiwan really needs official diplomatic allies. Yet, in the Pacific, both Taiwan and the United States (and US allies like Australia) demand that Taiwan maintain its official ties largely to help stabilize the region for the US. Taking as a starting point the decision by Tuvalu after its 2024 general elections to retain diplomatic relations with Taiwan despite rumors it might recognize China, this paper explores the role Taiwan currently plays as an extension of US and Australian interests in the region. Rather than analyzing Taiwan as a standalone actor, I examine how Taiwan's aid programs in the Pacific are increasingly linked with US and Australian initiatives to boost Taiwan's ability to "counteract" China and maintain diplomatic ties that Taiwan does not necessarily need. First, I discuss US and Australian reactions to and attempts to combat rumors that Tuvalu would likely form ties with China after its 2024 elections. Next, I examine new joint funding initiatives for Tuvalu announced by the US, Australia, and Taiwan after Tuvalu's 2024 elections. Finally, I discuss how Tuvaluan politicians leverage Taiwan's role as an extension of US and Australian interests and make strategic decisions to maintain ties with Taiwan despite prevailing trends in the Pacific toward favoring China and what this tells us about Taiwan's other Pacific allies.

Dr. Jess Marinaccio is an Assistant Professor of Asian Pacific Studies at California State University, Dominguez Hills and was recently employed in Tuvalu's Foreign Affairs Department. Dr. Marinaccio researches Pacific understandings of diplomacy and Taiwan's Pacific fisheries.

Nic Maclellan

Indo-Pacifique ou Pacifique Bleu: French Colonialism and Pacific Geopolitics

The crisis in New Caledonia, erupting on 13 May 2024, highlights ongoing tensions for French colonial policy in the Pacific islands. Since 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron has promoted France's Indo-Pacific Strategy, seeking to advance French and European interests in the region at a time of US-China strategic competition. Strategic partners like Australia have backed France's regional agenda, but pro-independence leaders in France's Pacific dependencies are eager to advance the region's Blue Pacific agenda, rather than France's geopolitical interests.

In New Caledonia, the 1998 Noumea Accord created a unique legal and constitutional framework to govern the islands, establishing new political institutions, programs for economic 'rebalancing' and New Caledonian citizenship, entrenched in the French Constitution. Since 2021, however, the French State has sought to derail the transition towards a new political status, leading to months of riots and protests.

This presentation will discuss the ways that the French State has sought to advance its Indo-Pacific Strategy, and diverse responses from the Kanak and Mā'ohi peoples, as they debate options for a new

political status: “independence in partnership with France”, “interdependence” or full political and cultural sovereignty.

Nic Maclellan is a correspondent for Islands Business magazine (Fiji). He has published widely on French policy in the Pacific and is co-author of *La France dans le Pacifique* (Editions La Découverte, Paris) and *After Moruroa – France in the South Pacific* (Ocean Press, New York and Melbourne).

Panel 2b Colonisation/Decolonisation

Michael Goldsmith (Chair), Waikato

Lachlan McNamee

Who Wants to Decolonize? Evidence from Survey Data in the Pacific

Why does popular support for decolonization movements vary so much across the Pacific? Drawing on recently collected representative survey data from Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna, this study reveals substantial variation in indigenous support for independence. Indigenous peoples in Hawaii, Guam, and New Caledonia exhibit very high levels of support for independence, whereas in French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna, and American Samoa they have low levels of support for independence. The paper examines the underlying factors contributing to this variation, particularly the majority presence of settlers who dominate the local political community in Hawaii, Guam and New Caledonia. This paper highlights the complexities surrounding self-determination and decolonization in the Pacific region. In territories with settlers, decolonization tends to mean independence, whereas in territories without settlers indigenous self-determination tends to mean the retention of ties to the colonial metropole.

Lachlan McNamee is a Lecturer of Politics at Monash University working on issues related to empire, decolonization, and settler colonialism.

Stephanie Lawson

Coloniality, Agency and Governance in Oceania: Perspectives on Independence and Constitution-Making

As Western imperialism gave way to the force of movements pushing for independence in the post-World War Two period, constitutional structures for the ‘new states’ that emerged across the world, from Africa and Asia to the Pacific, arose largely on the basis of existing colonial states. These structures were, by and large, oriented to a future in which some form of democratic governance would deliver widespread social and economic benefits. It was not long, however, before much of this optimism began to evaporate as the new governance arrangements failed to meet expectations. This has raised, among other things, questions of institutional design and the extent to which local context was taken into account in each case. One line of argument holds that unsuitable foreign models, such as the ‘Westminster system’, were simply foisted on new states by departing colonial powers with little or no account taken of Indigenous culture and traditions. By implication, this assumes a lack of agency on the part of local actors under conditions of ‘coloniality’. This paper examines the historical record of constitution-making in a number of Pacific island states and critically assesses the merits of such arguments.

Federica Pieristè

Politics on the Plate. Recipes for Decolonial Eating from Aotearoa

Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez defined the historical transformation of Oceanian stomachs into colonial subjects as “gastro-colonialism”, a complex process, constituted by overlapping neo-colonial gastronomic impositions that continues to deeply shape bodily experiences and collective subjectivities across Oceania. The expropriation of indigenous land, the exploitation of animals and land resources by the agricultural and livestock industries, the processes of urbanisation, the imposition of colonial education systems and the categorisation of native foods that has relegated them to the lower level of a “food diglossia”, have gradually eroded indigenous food systems across Oceania.

In recent years, growing concerns and discontent with the levels of food insecurity and the distressing health conditions that afflict a large proportion of native Oceanians, are resulting in the surfacing of numerous movements oriented towards the configuration of new ways of participating in food systems that posit as their ultimate goals socio-ecological sustainability and sovereignty. This is the case in Aotearoa-New Zealand, where a variety of collective and individual movements aim at finding new creative ways of claiming the right to self-determination over diet and food choices. Several Māori people today are in fact advocating for a change in the modes of food consumption and sourcing as a pathway to decolonisation. This quest for politically engaged food practices takes on different forms, from the adoption of a vegan or vegetarian diet, to the revival of “traditional” foods and community gardens.

This paper will explore a part of this multitude of initiatives and positions, which, despite their heterogeneity, are united by the desire to use diet as a space for creative manipulation of the complex post- (and neo-) colonial legacies, in an attempt to reconcile history, ethical, cultural and political stances, health and taste, while looking at the future.

Federica Pieristè is a PhD student of anthropology at Sapienza University of Rome and a visiting researcher at Te Puna Vai Marama Centre for Research. Her interests revolve around the political anthropology of food, with a geographical focus on Aotearoa and the Cook Islands.

Panel 2c Inclusive Peace Project: Possible Evolution in Power Sharing in New Caledonia

Nic Maclellan (Chair), IB

Mathias Chauchat

An Overview of Power Sharing in New Caledonia and its Decolonisation Process

Mathias Chauchat (Professor of Public Law, LARJE, University of New Caledonia)

Anthony Tutugoro

How Do Actors Perceive Power Sharing and the Inclusion of Citizens in the Decision Making Process in New Caledonia

Anthony Tutugoro (Postdoctoral researcher in Political Science and teaching assistant, LARJE, University of New Caledonia)

Jon Fraenkel

Power Sharing in the Pacific Islands and Beyond

The Pacific Island states include some of the world's most and least heterogeneous polities. Only in Fiji and New Caledonia have the communally-based political parties emerged that form the essential building blocks of what Arend Lijphart calls 'consociational democracy'. Most other Pacific Island states are either too heterogeneous to support such parties or so homogenous that political parties either do not emerge at all or acquire hegemony in dominant party systems or are scarcely differentiated programmatically. This paper argues that 'power sharing' entails a potentially preferable alternative to majoritarian democracy primarily in contexts where cohesive groups are represented by powerful actors on the national stage. Two implications for investigations of power-sharing in the Global South follow. The first is the importance of context: one needs to carefully analyse the character of cleavages (or their absence) to establish where power-sharing agreements might be appropriate or workable. Second, at least in those appropriate contexts, power-sharing rules are likely to need to be codified in law.

Session 3

Panel 3a Changing Geopolitics in Oceania (3)

Iati Iati (Chair), VUW

Marco De Jong

A Securitising Bargain: AUKUS, New Zealand, and "Pacific-led Regional Security"

The conditions of formal decolonisation continue to structure Pacific realities in what scholars have described as a "decolonising bargain" of sovereignty for material welfare. In the context of heightened geostrategic competition, Pacific nations are facing similar choices anew.

AUKUS has shifted how its member nations engage the Pacific, with an emphasis placed on concluding market and military access arrangements to counter China's influence. For Pacific leaders, such heightened, securitised interest presents opportunities, typically for bilateral assistance, but potentially at the expense of Pacific regional decision-making bodies and their security priorities of climate action, nuclear disarmament, and human development. In doing so, a bargain for alignment trades off a genuine Pacific security.

For New Zealand, AUKUS members' military focus and instrumental approach to aid and regionalism engages competing commitments to Anglosphere and Pacific-led engagement. This paper draws from archival records and contemporary declassified documents to show how New Zealand has approached such issues in the past, asking whether New Zealand's core interests in the Pacific are conceived in the same way today.

Faumuina Dr Marco De Jong is a Pacific historian and lecturer at the AUT Law School. He was raised in Tāmaki Makaurau with ties to Papa Puleia in Sāmoa. His work details the history of regional politics and environmental governance in the Pacific Islands.

Henrietta McNeill

Geopolitics in the Pacific Islands: Great Power Rivalry and Security Agreements

Security in the Pacific Islands region has always been through a 'patchwork' of multilateral, minilateral and bilateral arrangement, agreements and institutions. However, in recent years the escalation of geopolitical competition has seen a rise in bilateral security agreements by many

external partners, mired in secrecy, political fallout, and/or developing security dilemmas. This presentation will examine recent bilateral security agreements between Pacific Island states and China, Australia and the US; as well as the domestic and regional consequences of those agreements.

Dr Henrietta Mcneill is a Research Fellow at the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU. Her research focusses on Pacific security, geopolitics and regionalism, particularly the security-migration nexus. She is a co-editor of *Power and influence in the Pacific Islands: Understanding statecraftiness* (2024) with Joanne Wallis, Alan Tidwell and Michael Rose.

Fran Minchen Pan

Building Economic Ties through Cultural Foreign Policy: New Zealand, Taiwan, and ANZTEC

The preferential trade agreement (PTA) signed between Taiwan and New Zealand reached its 10th anniversary in 2023. The form and name of the agreement at the time of its signing resulted from negotiations reflecting bilateral economic and trade relations and Taiwan's international status. Notably, this binding economic agreement includes a globally unique Indigenous Cooperation Chapter.

While most preferential trade agreements (PTAs) seek to protect cultural elements through trade provisions (e.g., foreign film quota systems), the Indigenous Cooperation Chapter in ANZTEC represents a pioneering approach by embedding cultural considerations within an economic and trade framework. Even a decade later, this chapter is recognized for facilitating bilateral connections rather than merely safeguarding cultural heritage. Moreover, in the context of Taiwan and New Zealand—two nations that highly value Indigenous rights—this culturally-oriented chapter has transcended political constraints, fostering innovative exchanges and collaboration.

This paper aims to explore under what conditions does indigenous people's rights can be included as one of a PTA's chapters. I argue that PTAs' indigenous rights chapter can be achieved when indigenous people plays an critical role in the policy making process for agreement negotiators. Moreover, the signing of ANZTEC indicates that, in addition to indigenous politics, geostrategic competition also matters, especially for countries that seek more diplomatic space (e.g., Taiwan).

Fran Minchen Pan currently serves as the Business Development Manager at New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE²). Her career spans both the public and private sectors. Her current research interests include Indigenous diplomacy, regional climate change collaboration in the Austronesian region, and the development and promotion of renewable energy for Indigenous communities.

Panel 3b Perspectives from Fiji

Stephanie Lawson, (Chair), Macquarie

Jope Tarai

The Pacific Zone/Ocean of Peace – What is it? What does it Look Like from within Fiji and does it Matter in Regionalism?

In 2023, the concept of the [Pacific Zone of Peace](https://www.cip.gov.tw/en/index.html?cumid=B54B5C7E1E0F994092EDA9D0B7048931) or Ocean of Peace was introduced and advocated for

² I am currently work in Council of Indigenous Peoples <https://www.cip.gov.tw/en/index.html?cumid=B54B5C7E1E0F994092EDA9D0B7048931>, but I will change to new role in NZTE Taiwan team on December 16.

by, Fiji's coalition government Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka. In various regional and international forums, Rabuka has highlighted the need for the stabilizing notions in the idea of Peace, given the heightened geo-political pressures escalating in the Pacific. The specifics and scope of what Pacific Zone/Ocean of Peace may look like and its related overarching purpose, [has not been widely clarified](#). Added to this is the criticism that the Rabuka government, has been ambivalent or divided on regional environmental dumping concerns, coupled with the incentivized military and securitized relationships. However, optimism outside of the Rabuka government has also [included key civil society figures](#) and [observers](#) arguing for its potential to leverage Pacific interests. As such, this panel contribution makes an attempt to outline what the Pacific Zone/Ocean of Peace is, while critically reflecting on the concept from within Fiji towards the Pacific region. In doing so the contribution critically discusses and argues that the concept matters for Pacific regionalism but will depend on a number of considerations. This contribution is informed by a number of public speeches, regional/national institutional documents and shared insights from key regional figures.

Jope Tarai is a Ph.D. Scholar at the Australian National University (ANU). Prior to this, he taught at the University of the South Pacific.

[Jon Fraenkel](#)

Can there be Constitutional Change in Fiji?

Fiji's 2013 Constitution requires a 75% majority in parliament followed by a referendum backed by 75% of registered voters in a referendum for any amendment. Even if that threshold were reached, the immunity provisions are, allegedly, impossible to change. This paper explores the potential methods for constitutional change. It first reviews the experience of changes to entrenched constitutions left by authoritarian regimes in Chile and Taiwan. Second, it considers the arguments that constitutional change might be possible in Fiji through a legal challenge on the grounds of (i) non-compliance with the decrees issued by the Bainimarama government, and the potential scope for a resurrection of either (ii) the 1997 Constitution or (iii) the 2012 draft Constitutional assembled by the Yash Ghai-led Fiji Constitution Commission. It concludes that each of these approaches is likely to run into difficulties, but that there does exist scope for a different kind of constitutional challenge through the courts.

[Mosmi Bhim](#)

Political Military Reforms for Sustainable Democracy in Fiji

Fiji had a change in government leadership after 16 years when 2006 coup leader Voreqe Bainimarama's FijiFirst Party lost the 2022 General Elections. Fiji's first coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka became the new Prime Minister of the People's Coalition Government, which has been touting legislative changes in the constitution, electoral laws, and contentious legislations. A National Security and Defence Review (NSDR) has been underway in Fiji in 2024 while a Truth and Reconciliation Commission will commence hearings in 2025. Discussions have commenced on legal ways to amend Fiji's 2013 Constitution. These processes are anticipated to move Fiji towards sustainable democracy and end the coup culture. The author is an observer and participant in the above activities. In this paper, deficits in Fiji's democracy are examined utilizing theories of Dahl, and Linz and Stepan. Fiji's political-military relations are scrutinised through Janowitz' theories. The paper reiterates findings of the author's PhD thesis that placed Fiji as being in the state of transition to democracy only since independence, and regressing into authoritarianism post-coup and into electoral authoritarianism after the 2014 elections. Fiji returned to transition to democracy after the 2022 election. The paper proposes reforms to Fiji's laws and security sector in order to achieve a consolidated democracy in Fiji.

Dr Mosmi Bhim has been a faculty member of the Department of Ethics and Governance at the Fiji National University (FNU) for 12 years. She teaches the Bachelor of Applied Social Sciences (BASS) program. PhD thesis title, completed at the University of New England (UNE) in Australia: “Authoritarian Regimes in Small Island States: The Anomalous Cases of Electoral Autocracies in Fiji, The Maldives and Seychelles”.

Panel 3c China and Taiwan in the Pacific

Jason Young (Chair), VUW

Chen Xi

Climate Governance and China-Pacific Island Countries Climate Cooperation

As one of the regions most severely affected by climate change, Pacific Island Countries (PICs) face existential threats, such as rising sea levels, natural disasters, economic and social ecological destruction. Responding to these threats is further challenged by generally fragile economies, underdeveloped science and technology ecosystems, and a lack of human capital in the region, which leaves PICs highly dependent on international aid. This paper begins by analysing problems that PICs currently face in the field of climate governance, including insufficient climate finance, lagging technology capability, inadequate regional coordination and an inability to decisively determine their own development agenda. The paper then outlines measures that PICs have carried out to address the problems, such as optimising sources of climate finance, enhancing the response capacity, improving coordination mechanisms and breaking through discourse constraints. A special focus is given to regional organisations which have served as principal platforms during the process. Furthermore, this paper looks into the climate cooperation between PICs and China. While also a member of the Global South, China possesses significant capabilities in many of the above areas, pointing to opportunities for collaboration and mutually beneficial collective action. While significant achievements have already been realised, further potential remains.

Ms Chen Xi is a PhD candidate of the Australian Studies Centre at East China Normal University with her research interests in China-Australia relations and Asia-Pacific studies. She has published papers and reports, co-authored books and presented her academic work in a number of prestigious international academic conferences.

Lin Pu

A Geoeconomic Explanation of Chinese Training for Pacific Police

In recent years, China has emerged as a significant external actor in providing police assistance in the Pacific. Beyond supplying police-related equipment, the Chinese government sends advisory teams and invites Pacific police officers for training in China. What factors drive the PRC to train police from specific Pacific countries? While existing studies emphasize the Pacific governments' demand for stability, China's strategic ambitions, and US-China geopolitical competition, this paper highlights the often-overlooked geoeconomic perspective. Specifically, this study examines China's role as a major trade partner in the Pacific, particularly in the context of natural resource exports. A widely accepted view holds that security cooperation between China and a foreign country tends to deepen as their bilateral relationship is upgraded—such as when six of China's Pacific diplomatic allies transitioned from a strategic partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2018, followed by an increase in Chinese police presence. However, I argue that such a hypothetical statement is valid only if trade in

natural resources is included, as China has emerged as the leading export destination for mineral and fossil fuels from the Pacific, and stability in its exporters aligns with the facilitation of Chinese energy security. To justify my argument, this study employs logistic regression based on country-year panel data with a regional focus on the Pacific (excluding Australia and New Zealand) in a time frame from 2000 to 2023. The findings suggest that governments with closer diplomatic relations with Beijing are more likely to have police trained by the Chinese authorities if they export more natural resources from the Pacific to China. The research concludes that China's outward economic practices further advance its police cooperation in the Pacific, serving as a foreign policy tool to achieve strategic objectives in line with geoeconomic interests.

Lin Pu is a Ph.D. student at the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University (Australia). His research interests include international political economy, international security, and authoritarianism, with a regional focus on Asia-Pacific.

Cheng-Cheng Li

Anchoring Diplomacy in Reciprocity: Scholarship Programs in Palau-Taiwan Relations?

Diplomatic relations in Oceania are of global importance, and Taiwan's relationships in the region are no exception. This dissertation examines the relatively new diplomatic relationship between Taiwan and Palau. Most scholarship focuses on the separate situations and predicaments of these two countries, especially concentrating on the roles of larger powers, specifically, the United States and China. I argue in this paper that a study of the island nations is important because understanding the perspectives and foreign policy of Palau offers valuable insights into the dynamics of international relations. I further argue that focusing study on the diplomatic relations between these two nations through the stories of people in each place reveal the reciprocal natures of these relationships, which is often overlooked in geopolitical analysis. While several aspects of the diplomatic relationship between Taiwan and Palau are worthy of study, I have chosen to focus this research on Taiwan's higher education scholarship aid to Palau. The Taiwan scholarships program was launched in 2005, and today there are around 200 plus Palauan students who have gained degrees in Taiwan. The number of students choosing Taiwan for their higher education increased each year. The majority of the Taiwan graduates have become public servants, which has changed the political outlook of the country. Today, Palauan students are the largest Pacific Islander community in Taiwan. While Taiwan's scholarship program in Palau is often viewed as a government-dominated program, I argue that it is a complex and reciprocal relationship, involving contributions from many of the Palauans.

Cheng-Cheng LI is from the harbor city of Kaohsiung, Taiwan. He is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Political Science at University of Hawai'i. He is the research intern in the Pacific Islands Development Program at East-West Center.

Panel 3d Roundtable: Navigating Culture: Comparative Perspectives and Practical Challenges

Reviewing different perspectives and navigating culture within established apparatuses can be impactful and elucidates the conditions in which Pacific peoples work. These considerations include structures of power and systems of politics to understand the application of broad knowledge systems. In bringing together multiple perspectives, this panel provides an opportunity to consider these conditions and approaches from practitioners, academics, museum professionals and community members on navigating aspects of culture in various spaces. This panel invites practical reflections from across disciplines, communities and artistic endeavours in connection with Oceania. The talanoa

panel provides a dialogue with panellists and offers comparative perspectives alongside practical challenges in the spaces they inhabit.

Wanda Ieremia-Allen (Chair), Auckland Museum

Hai-Yuean Tualima (VUW)

Solamalemal Dr Hai-Yuean Tualima, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Victoria University of Wellington (hai-yuean.tualima@vuw.ac.nz)

George Carter (ANU)

George Carter is Senior Fellow and Deputy Head of the Department of Pacific Affairs at The Australian National University (ANU). He is the Director for the ANU Pacific Institute and cluster lead on Climate Security, and Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge at ANU Institute of Climate Change Energy and Disaster. His research explores the interplay of international politics and security, with climate change (diplomacy, negotiations, finance, democracy, gender and knowledge), through the influence and authority/power of Islands (Pacific states and peoples, Small Island Developing States).

Session 4

Panel 4a French Engagement in a Changing Ocean

The aim of this panel is, firstly, to highlight the relationship between the French state and the French Oceanic Territories (FOTs) for an Anglophone audience. Since its recent Indo-Pacific pivot, France is seeking to enhance its influence in regional affairs through security and development cooperation, while at the same time facing political and social challenges in its overseas territories. This is particularly evident in the ongoing political unrest in New Caledonia, which is exacerbating competing visions of institutional design and has ripple effects of regional magnitude. Hence Paris's reflex to monitor the external engagement of Nouméa and Papeete, while both capitals aspire further to project their own interests in the international arena. Secondly, this panel also sheds light on the French contribution to academic debates in the Pacific region. Indeed, as a scientific power, France participates in the discussions on the strategies of the Pacific Rim countries. In that regard, one presentation will examine Australia's intervention in the undersea cables that irrigate the Pacific cyberspace. As they share common challenges with their Pacific counterparts, including geography, ethnic division and local agency, FOTs can inform and learn from each other. Traditionally, the academic work emanating from "Franconesia" remains confined to the Francophone sphere. This limits the circulation of ideas and leads to a certain "academic insularity". By bringing together four PhD students from New Caledonia, French Polynesia and mainland France, the panel will present different French academic perspectives on Pacific politics and aims to bridge the gap with Anglophone counterparts.

Adrian Muckle (Chair), VUW

Raihaamana Tevahitua

Australia-France-New Caledonia: Disentangling the Trilateral Relationship

While Australia perceives geostrategic and diplomatic value in the French Oceanian Collectivities (FOCs), France goes further, seeing itself as a 'Pacific state' legitimised by these dependencies. Being part of the French Republic, the FOCs view France as their traditional partner, and Australia as a source of diversification. Since the 2000s, Australia has sought France's stabilising contribution in the region, whereas France values Australia as the leading regional player. However, the cancellation of the submarine agreement led to a significant diplomatic crisis between both capitals. The change in Australian government administration served to rekindle the relationship. Both middle powers need to cooperate towards common objectives. This implies stepping up military cooperation in New Caledonia. Nevertheless, some island voices express opposition to militarisation as a potential source of insecurity. This situation recalls the necessity to improve trilateral coordination.

Raihaamana has degrees in geopolitics and public law. He has worked with export and tourism. His interests include island development and multifaceted security. He aims to promote the views of Oceanic people in the contemporary strategic context.

Clara Filippi

Between Colonial past and Common Destiny: Shadows and Light for New Caledonia

In the aftermath of communal conflicts, wars, colonisation, genocide and dictatorships, which narratives of history should be recognised? Does reconciliation depend on a shared recognition of memories? When memories are painful or forgotten, when reconciliation is ongoing or unrealisable, what should be the role of schools? These questions are currently at the heart of New Caledonia's struggle to write its history. Civil society is trying to unite New Caledonians, but it is confronted by two major sides of the society whose collective memories of the past are in direct competition. The main question raised by this paper is whether the memory work, in other words, taking into account the different interpretations of the past and the various memories of this past in the school context by building bridges, leads to reconciliation? The first interviews show that the answer is ambivalent. In conclusion, this paper looks at the role of France and New Caledonia in this process of transmission and reconciliation. Recent events have shown that if we can't undo the past, the way we choose to manage these difficult pasts has an impact on the stability of the region.

Clara Filippi is a Nouméa-born PhD candidate, currently a Visiting Fellow at the ANU, doing her PhD at UCLouvain. She's interested in how New Caledonia transmits its violent past (a period called the "Events").

Sophie Hamel

The Development Of Internet Networks In Pacific Islands: A Geopolitically Contested Space

The strategic competition for influence between China and Australia in the Pacific Islands, including its drivers and consequences for the regional order, has been extensively examined (Brady 2010, Varrall 2021), especially in areas like infrastructure development (Szadziwski 2021), security cooperation (Connolly 2024), and the Pacific Islands' positioning between the Belt and Road Initiative and Indo-Pacific strategies (Kabutaulaka 2021). However - except for some preliminary research (Watson 2021) - there is a notable lack of analysis on the geopolitical dynamics surrounding the development of Internet networks in the region, despite the Pacific Islands Forum prioritizing connectivity and technology in its 2050 Strategy for the Blue Continent (PIF 2022). Through a geopolitical lens, this paper demonstrates how great power competition significantly shapes Internet development in Pacific islands, where intertwined political considerations influence outcomes. Drawing on my ongoing PhD research in geopolitics, including interviews with governments and telecommunications companies across Oceania (Australia, Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, New Zealand), the

paper utilizes the French school of geopolitics methodology (Lacoste 1993) to explore the power rivalries within the Pacific Islands' cyberspace. It delves into the tensions and conflicting strategies deployed by stakeholders seeking control over these critical infrastructures, including Pacific views. The analysis highlights how the representation of Chinese technology as a security threat by Western countries, including Australia, has led to efforts to block Chinese companies from providing international subsea cables and domestic networks in the region, particularly with the rise of 5G. While these strategies are framed as serving Pacific interests, they also advance Australia's strategic and security goals. Furthermore, the paper explores how Pacific Island stakeholders perceive and navigate this competition, often leveraging it to their advantage. Hence, the paper provides new insights into the geopolitical competition over the Pacific Islands' cyberspace, emphasizing the complex interplay of national, regional, and Indo-Pacific interests in developing these critical infrastructures.

Sophie Hamel is in her 3rd year of a PhD in geography at the French Institute of Geopolitics (University Paris 8). She is also an associate researcher at the GEODE (Geopolitics of the Datasphere) research center.

Panel 4b Relationality in Pacific Politics

How can we understand Pacific politics in terms of relationality? The Pacific Islands region, with its immense diversity in terms of political systems, political cultures, and political dynamics, has much to offer to the relational turn in political science and international relations. This panel draws together emerging research agendas in Pacific political studies that examine relationality in politics, governance and methodology, to consider how new frameworks for understanding relationality in politics and governance can be developed. This panel will highlight innovation in the field and the contributions scholars of the Pacific can make to the broader discipline of political science.

Kerryn Baker (Chair), ANU

Caitlin Mollica (Discussant), Newcastle

Theresa Meki

Haus Krai: National Symbol for Grief, Outcry, and a Melanesian Space for Diplomacy

Haus krai – the space and place for sharing grief over a beloved deceased is pervasive all throughout Papua New Guinea's ethnically diverse landscape. This staple of PNG's traditional economy and cultural society has continued into the urban modern setting albeit in a hybrid format. Yet the activities performed therein, and its implications carry literal and figurative weight that sustains one's connection to place identity, kin and belonging. In the last decade, this mourning custom and the term haus krai has become a national symbol for grief and outcry. During March 2021 upon the passing of PNG's first Prime Minister Michael Somare, a ten-day national haus krai was held at Port Moresby's Sir John Guise indoor complex. This event provided the opportunity for Port Moresby's public, the diplomatic community and other state dignitaries to attend and participate in communal grief. Amidst the presentations and orations delivered by national leaders, the haus krai atmosphere of collective sorrow also offers an opportunity for relationships to be reinforced, and alliances to be built. Drawing on this and a few other high profile and national haus krai occasions, this paper conceptualises the Melanesian haus krai phenomenon as a potential site for indigenous diplomacy as it fosters the ideal atmosphere to restore and strengthen relationships.

Dr Theresa Meki is a Pacific Research Fellow with ANU's Department of Pacific Affairs. Her research focuses on politics and history in Papua New Guinea.

Priestley Habru

Understanding Pacific Political Governance through Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy (PD) is the good impression that a country seeks to make on the public of another country. PD is therefore an effort to appear attractive and to create soft power. PD also involves building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government policies (Gilboa 2015). If PD is to sustain mutually beneficial relations between nations for the advancement of global peace and prosperity, then a relational framework is the clear alternative to soft power (Fitzpatrick 2014). This paper proposes an integrated public diplomacy approach with emphasis on the agencies of the publics in the Pacific. Views from the public sphere at the local or sub-national level could help us better understand Pacific political governance and be able develop strategies to respond to them in a synergistic manner. Pacific publics are not mere recipients of public diplomacy programs and instruments which are often framed and created in the interest of partner countries. This paper also seeks to understand how partner countries use PD to influence or engage with the foreign publics in the Pacific and how are exercises of public diplomacy received, interpreted and translated across the Pacific?

Priestley Habru is a PhD Candidate at The University of Adelaide researching mediated public diplomacy and the impact this has on public diplomacy by external partner states. He is a journalist by profession having worked in the Solomon Islands for over 15 years before embarking on his PhD journey.

Mercy Masta

Redefining Australia's Relationship with PNG: Challenging Historical Narratives and Embracing Regional Dynamics

Australia's historical connection with PNG, rooted in colonial history, has deeply shaped policy decisions and narratives within Australian politics. However, amidst shifting global dynamics, there arises a pressing need to reassess these entrenched viewpoints. Through active engagement with Papua New Guinean perspectives and a sincere examination of the colonial legacy, Australian policymakers stand to embark on a journey of profound learning and relationship building. The session presents a thought-provoking critique of Australia's historical and contemporary interactions with PNG. It challenges conventional wisdom, emphasising the significance of a more nuanced comprehension of power dynamics in the region. Moreover, it emphasises the transformative potential of Australian policymakers confronting uncomfortable truths and engaging in authentic dialogue with their Papua New Guinean counterparts. Through this process, meaningful connections can be forged, and mutual understanding can pave the way for more equitable and respectful relationships to advance both PNG and Australia's political interests in Australia and the Pacific region.

Dr Mercy Masta is a Research Fellow with ANU's Department of Pacific Affairs. Her research explores notions of Pacific Island masculinity and the engagement of men and boys in gender and development efforts in the region.

Romitesh Kant

Ties that Bind: Exploring Relationality in Fijian Political Masculinities: Methodological Insights from the Field

This paper builds on the emerging scholarship surrounding relationality in political studies, particularly focusing on the Pacific region. Drawing from my PhD research on political masculinities in Fiji, this paper interrogates the relational dynamics between politics, gender, and power by exploring Fijian political institutions. Using an intersectional approach, political ethnography and feminist methodologies, I examine how personal and institutional relationships shape and are shaped by the gendered performances of Fijian leaders.

Central to this paper is the concept of *relationality*, which not only underpins the methodological framework but also reflects the intricate socio-political web that Fijian leaders navigate. Relational ethics, drawn from Pacific research methodologies, and the importance of positionality inform the ethnographic methods employed during my fieldwork. The paper will demonstrate how these relationships are integral to understanding the formation and contestation of masculine identities within Fiji's political system. By analysing these dynamics, this work contributes to broader conversations about the relational turn in political science and the role of Pacific scholarship in enriching global political theory.

Romitesh Kant is a PhD candidate with the ANU's Department of Pacific Affairs. His research examines the symbiotic relationship of politics and masculinity in the Fijian national context.

Panel 4c The Rules-Based Order, Criminal Deportation, Statelessness and Strategic Competition

Solstice Middleby (Chair), Adelaide

Sione Tekiteki and Joel Nilon,

Reimagining the Rules Based Order from a Blue Pacific Perspective

With the rise of the developing world, especially China, the world has seen a proliferation of strategic framings that posit the “international rules-based order” in different ways and from different perspectives. For instance, the Indo-Pacific framing, which emerged from the free and open Indo-Pacific perspective championed by Japan in the 90s³, has evolved into what some in the Pacific now construe as an anti-China foreign policy positioning. In recent years, we have seen the launch of multiple Indo-Pacific strategies and policies that reference the international rules-based order, and where Pacific states through various partner led engagements have been asked to sign on in support of these strategic framings.

In the Pacific region, the Blue Pacific narrative and the subsequent *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* has articulated the region's collective aspirations, priorities and positions from a region-led perspective. The Blue Pacific narrative is underpinned by the rationale that the Pacific region would not capitulate to geostrategic competition and increasing geopolitical interest and instead, it would place its own regional priorities at the forefront of its collective advocacy.

In 2023, the Pacific Islands Forum endorsed the concept of the Zone of Peace (later reframed as the Ocean of Peace) as presented by the Prime Minister of Fiji that sought to reaffirm existing regional security arrangements, and the recognition of the Pacific region's increasing focus on regional peace

³ Hosoya, Yuichi, *FOIP 2.0: The Evolution of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy*, 17 September 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13439006.2019.1622868>

and security efforts reaffirming that the region will not be a theatre of geopolitical contests in an increasingly multi-polar world. The Ocean of Peace has the potential to reimagine the international rules-based order from the perspective of the Pacific, while at the same time counter the increasingly worrying geopolitical tension playing out in the region.

This paper will consider and unpack what is meant by the rules-based order from the perspective of these different strategic framings, and to further consider how the Pacific region, through the Ocean of Peace, can contribute to and/or shape the evolving interpretation of the rules-based order aligned to the region's emerging position on international law, including for example on the issue of sea level rise and the legal implications therein.

Before joining academia with the Faculty of Law at Auckland University of Technology in September 2024, Mr Tekiteki was Director of Governance and Engagement with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat for 9 years. In that position, he had direct oversight over the core meetings of the PIF, including at Leaders meeting; the PIF's strategic international work with partners and multilateral agencies; regional engagement and coordination; good governance and international law portfolio. Prior to that Mr Tekiteki was the Clerk of the Parliament of Tonga and was heavily involved in Tonga's constitutional reform process (2006-2010).

Joel Nilon, Australian Security Colleague.

[Henrietta McNeill](#)

The International Implications of Criminal Deportations to The Pacific Islands

Criminal deportations have been highlighted as a transnational crime risk by the Pacific Islands Forum since 2011, including in the Boe Declaration Action Plan (2019) and the Pacific Regional Organised Crime Disruption Strategy (2024). The main states that deport to the Pacific Islands are the traditional security and development partners of Australia, New Zealand and the United States, which raises questions about how deportation policies may negatively affect the relationship between Pacific states and their partners. This paper will share research conducted in Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga about criminal deportations, and focus upon how criminal deportation policies and the lack of support for reintegration shapes the relationship between deporting and receiving states.

Dr Henrietta McNeill is a Research Fellow (Pacific security, geopolitics, regionalism) at the Department of Pacific Affairs at the ANU. Her research focus is Pacific regional security and the security-migration nexus, particularly transnational crime, criminal deportations, border security, citizenship, and security cooperation.

[Julija Sardelić](#)

Statelessness Reconfigured: Responses to Emerging Statelessness Risk in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific Region

This paper offers a socio-legal analysis of the politics towards statelessness risk in Aotearoa New Zealand and in the Pacific Region. In 2013, The United Nations Commissioner for Refugees made a commitment to eradicating statelessness. It operationalized this commitment with the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024. The plan proposed, among other actions, to eradicate major situations that contribute to statelessness as well as creating the legal preconditions so that such situations would not be occurring the future (such as the more prevalent ratification of the UN 1954 Statelessness Convention and 1961 Statelessness Reduction Convention among states). However, as 2024 approaches its end, the goal of ending statelessness is starting to be less reachable. In addition, the meaning of statelessness itself is reconfigured with challenges arising because of climate change (such as territories becoming uninhabitable, including the rising sea levels in low-lying Pacific

Islands) and citizenship revocation practices being used again around the Globe. In recognition of the new potential statelessness risk Pacific Islands Forum made a Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise reiterating the need for the ‘right to nationality’ and ‘continuing statehood’. This paper first questions how Aotearoa New Zealand positions itself to the Global Action Plan as it still did not have access to the 1954 Statelessness Convention. Second, it investigates how different Pacific countries respond to the potential statelessness risk.

Dr Julija Sardelić is Senior Lecturer at Political Science and International Relations Programme at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington. Her research interests encompass citizenship/statelessness, forced migration, nationalism and human rights.

Piotr Topór

Beyond Realist and Dependency Analyses: The Nexus of Strategic Competition, Regional Networking, and Norm Creation in the Pacific Region

The aim of this paper is to propose an alternative analytical framework for understanding contemporary relations in the South Pacific region, one that goes beyond traditional realist and dependency theories, employing **network analysis**. This approach responds to numerous calls in the literature for a broader perspective on the South Pacific region, as traditional theories, even if relevant, have limitations in capturing the full complexity of Pacific relations (e.g. Clarke, Pan 2022; Waqavakatoga, Wallis 2023). While great power competition undeniably influences the region, and Pacific Island countries navigate asymmetrical relationships with major and regional powers (such as the United States, Australia, China, or the European Union), it is crucial to view these smaller states not merely as objects of rivalry but as active participants with relevant **agency**. This paper presents a theoretical model that combines four key elements: **geostrategic competition**, **power asymmetry**, the potential for **norms creation**, and **regional networking**. In this model, South Pacific states, despite their limited capacity, are positioned as important components of a complex network of relations with major and regional powers in the region. This network dynamic creates opportunities for Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) countries to influence the formation and promotion of significant norms and to further their interests, such as sustainable governance, an expanded concept of security, or climate resilience policies.

The second part of the paper analyzes the adaptations made by selected regional and global powers (e.g., Australia) in their strategies toward the South Pacific in recent years, within the context of network analysis. It argues that while PIF countries face significant asymmetry in their relationships with larger Indo-Pacific and global powers, the growing competition in the region provides them with leverage to promote norms through networking processes that occur both within the region and beyond it (e.g., the rivalry between the PRC, the USA, and its allies). The success of these norms’ creation efforts will determine whether the increasing global competition will serve as an opportunity for PIF states or become a source of discontent. Therefore, understanding the competitive and cooperative networking processes in the region is essential for assessing the future opportunities and risks for Pacific Island countries in the coming years.

There are three major advantages of this model of analysis: first, a dynamic rather than purely hierarchical perspective on the nature of politics in the region, emphasizing the **dynamic interactions** within the existing hierarchical structures; second, an assumption of the (even if limited) **agency** of Pacific countries in regional politics and regional networks, and not viewing them merely as objects of rivalry between major powers; and third, a combination of **material** and **normative levels of analysis**.

Piotr Topór: PhD candidate at the Doctoral School in the Social Sciences, Jagiellonian University, lecturer at the Faculty of International and Political Studies.

Panel 4d Roundtable: Political Instability in the Pacific

The fall of the Sovaleni government in Tonga, a snap election in Vanuatu, no-confidence motions in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, major schisms in the ruling FAST party in Samoa, and riots in New Caledonia have been by some seen as signalling a new era of ‘political turmoil’ in the Pacific and by others as continuity of ‘stable instability’. In this session, a group of specialists from the region will talk about recent developments. Lopeti Senituli will look at the change of government in Tonga, Anthony Tutugoro will examine the May 2024 riots in New Caledonia and the change in the territory’s government in 2025, Anna Naupa will discuss Vanuatu’s snap election in January 2025 and Iati Iati will consider what the splits in the ruling FAST party mean for the future in Sāmoa.

Jon Fraenkel (Chair), VUW

Anthony Tutugoro

Difficulties of Peacemaking after the May 2024 Insurrection in New Caledonia

Anthony Tutugoro, Post-Doctoral researcher, University of New Caledonia

Lopeti Senituli (Legal practitioner, Nuku’alofa),

The Influence of the Monarchy on Government Change in Tonga

Lopeti Senituli is a Law Practitioner in Tonga and a former Political Advisor to two Tongan Prime Ministers, Dr. Feleti Vaka’uta Sevele (2006-2010) and Samulea ‘Akilisi Pohiva (2018- 2019). He was founding Director of the office of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement (2000-2003) and prior to that, was Director of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre Inc, the secretariat of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement (NFIP), based in Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand (1987-1993) and Suva, Fiji (1993-2000). He has also served the Tongan government in various capacities including CEO of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (2012-2015). He served as representative of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) to the Churches Commission on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches (WCC-CCIA) in Geneva (1999-2006). He was appointed as the representative from the Polynesia region to the Pacific Islands Forum - Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (PIF-SSCR) (2015 – 2018) and has been a member of the International Advisory Committee of the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) of the University of New South Wales-Law School since 1994. He is the immediate past President of the Tonga Law Society.

Anna Naupa (ANU)

Vanuatu’s January 2025 Snap Election

Anna Naupa holds MA degrees from the Harvard Kennedy School, and the University of Hawai’i, and is currently a PhD student at the Australian National University. She is a development and policy specialist with many years of experience across the Pacific region.

Anna Naupa, School of Culture, History and Language, ANU.

Iati Iati (VUW)

Triggers and Repercussions of Schisms in the Ruling FAST Party in Sāmoa

Iati Iati, Victoria University of Wellington.

Session 5

Panel 5a Diplomacy, Regionalism, Media

Stephen Levine (Chair), VUW

Anna Naupa

Vernacular Diplomacy in Great Power Rivalry: The Case Of Vanuatu

This paper explores the potential for oceanic forms of diplomacy to safeguard state agency in an era of heightened geopolitical dynamics. Through my PhD research on the application of kastom in Vanuatu's diplomatic practice, I have developed a conceptual framework for understanding patterns and practices of inter-group engagement, which I term 'vernacular diplomacy.' Neither parallel to, nor in the shadows of, state-based diplomacy based on the Westphalian model, I argue that vernacular diplomacies are culturally-grounded, legitimate forms of inter-state engagement that offer opportunities for mutually beneficial outcomes where other hegemonic forms of diplomacy may be challenged. Drawing on examples from my research in Vanuatu, I propose that vernacular diplomacies allow for a broader appreciation of oceanic and indigenous forms of diplomacy, and are very much part of a strategic calculus in an era of great power competition in our region.

Anna Naupa holds MA degrees from the Harvard Kennedy School, and the University of Hawai'i, and is currently a PhD student at the Australian National University. She is a development and policy specialist with many years of experience across the Pacific region.

Grant Wyeth

Supporting Pacific Regionalism

In a speech to the Pacific Island Forum in May 2022, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said that "As fellow members of the Pacific Family, our security and prosperity is truly a thing we achieve together, or not at all." Australia, with much of its population located along the Pacific coastline, has a Pacific identity and a central role in Pacific regionalism.

Pacific regionalism rests on the identification of commonalities – key priorities shared across the region – that can serve as a foundation to build a sense of solidarity, but in an era of rapid geopolitical change there are forces impacting upon it.

This paper – the synthesis of consultations with more than 50 experts from Australia and the Pacific – calls for Australia to plan for and be ready to respond to developments in Pacific regionalism. It outlines a vision and pathways for how Australia can play a role not just as a partner or a supporter of Pacific regionalism but as a collaborative voice at the Pacific regionalism table.

Grant Wyeth is a Senior Policy Analyst at the Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue (AP4D). Grant's commentary has been published widely, including in his role as The Diplomat's Oceania columnist and in previous roles at the University of Melbourne's Asia Institute and Australian Foreign Affairs magazine.

Solstice Middleby

Regionalism or Regionalism? Mediating Geopolitics through Consensus at the Pacific Islands Forum

This paper explores how the practice of consensus decision-making within the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) shapes the region's ability to assert a clear and unified regional position in the face of great power competition, particularly in the context of increasing geopolitical rivalry in the Pacific. By analysing a range of consensus decisions in the Forum's history—ranging from positions on decolonization, engagement with superpowers, and nuclear policy—this paper examines how regional power dynamics and external pressures are negotiated through the practice of consensus, highlighting both the strengths and limitations of this practice in achieving regional interests. Special attention is given to how Australia's strategic interests as a 'core western state' have influence the Forum's decision-making process and complicated the region's collective ability to assert autonomy in international affairs. Through an analysis of historical and contemporary examples, this paper draws on both archival research and ethnographic interviews to provide a grounded understanding of how consensus operates in practice. Utilising practice theory as a conceptual framework, the paper critically reflects on how the habitual actions, interactions, and power structures within the Forum contribute to the reproduction or disruption of regional power dynamics. The research offers new insights into the ongoing relevance of consensus as a tool for Pacific regionalism in an era of heightened geopolitical competition.

Solstice Middleby, PhD Candidate - University of Adelaide, Research Collaborator - Australian National University. In addition to her PHD Candidacy, Soli is a

n author, partnership broker and former Australian Diplomat to the Pacific. She has lived and worked across the Pacific Region for the last 20 years, making homes in Goroka and Suva and establishing a wide base of Pacific connections. Soli has supported Pacific-led development through partnerships approaches, innovation and multi-stakeholder collaborations working with AusAID, DFAT, IUCN and recently as the CEO of the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) where she led the program towards a Pacific led approach from 2018-2021.

Panel 5b Gender, Sexuality, Religion

Nicole George (Chair), UQ

Lauren Taijeron

Practicing Expansive Definitions of Guinaiya: Anthology on Love, Land, Queerness, and Abolition

This proposal outlines a project by Lauren Taijeron, a queer CHamoru scholar and artist, who will utilize their MA portfolio to create an anthology of life writings in the form of short essays, poems, and reflections to explore CHamoru practices of love such as “guinaiya” and “gofli’e.”⁴ Through her anthology, Taijeron will interrogate settler colonialism's impact on guinaiya and gofli'e through the examination of queerness and the carceral system in order to demonstrate apparent carceral tactics and the systems of control that have generated lateral violences in the CHamoru community specifically against the queer CHamoru community. The settler colonial definition of love appears in ways that are antithetical to CHamoru practices of love because colonial powers define love through capitalism and

⁴ “‘Chamorro Grammar’ as Dr. Sandra Chung | Kumisión I Fino’ CHamoru.” Accessed September 7, 2024. <https://kumisionchamoru.guam.gov/chamorro-grammar-as-dr-sandra-chung/>. There are various spellings of “CHamoru” such as “Chamoru,” or “Chamorro.” This proposal and anthology will be honoring the Kumision's decision on spelling in accordance with its mission to improve literacy. It will also honor the alternative spellings preferred by any possible participants and/or authors I have cited/will cite.

militarism. This in turn erases, polices, and makes CHamoru practices of love difficult to practice as it was founded on a reciprocal relationship between people and land. This happens through the continued violent occupation which includes the intentional erasure of language and history which is reflective of a genealogy of fluidity in gender and sexual expressions, as well as the straining of relationships to land. Taijeron hopes to argue that turning towards a CHamoru definition of love or claiming to practice a CHamoru definition of love under settler colonialism is only possible when we are fighting for a decolonization that is inclusive of all CHamoru people as well as the land. Taijeron hopes this anthology can become a call to her community as well as to the world to reflect on their conceptions of love and ask themselves if we are in urgent need of a definition that is rooted in the land. And if so, how can we bring each other there?

Lauren Taijeron, a queer CHamoru scholar and creative from Guåhan, is in her second year of her Pacific Islands Studies MA program at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. She is interested in interrogating contemporary CHamoru methods of care that have sustained various settler occupations.

Kylie Noelani Skye Akiona

E Ho‘ohali‘a: Remembering Native Hawaiian Visions of Pu‘uhonua

Kānaka ‘Ōiwi (Native Hawaiians) today suffer from continuing legacies of Western imperialism and settler colonialism on our ancestral land. One of the many ways Kānaka ‘Ōiwi are intentionally and violently exploited as Indigenous peoples is our gross overrepresentation in prisons and jails under the Hawai‘i Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (formerly Hawai‘i Department of Public Safety), despite being a minority in the general population. As one of the top 25 incarcerators in the world, Hawai‘i is also the number one incarcerator of women across the United States, and Native Hawaiian women in particular are disproportionately incarcerated at higher rates than Native Hawaiian men. Incarcerated māhū (queer), trans, nonbinary, genderfluid, and queer/MVPFAFF+ folks are essentially erased from and nonexistent in Hawai‘i public data sets, are caged in gendered facilities that they do not belong in, and whose safety is not seriously considered in addition to their increased vulnerability to harm, abuse, and exploitation compared to cis-gendered peoples. Ongoing work demonstrates the effectiveness of incorporating Indigenous anti-punitory ways of knowing into community solutions, reiterates the need for more relationship-based research for criminalized māhū, and demands that policy measures we advocate for divest from state-building and reinvest public funds into proven feminist decarceration approaches. I explore the colonial constraints placed on the research process of carceral facilities in Hawai‘i, champion the incorporation of Native epistemologies and values into welcoming incarcerated loved ones, critically examine mass incarceration in Hawai‘i, and echo the growing demand to reaffirm the humanity of criminalized peoples through prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition, land back, and bodies back.

Noelani Akiona is a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi CPIS MA student at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa born and raised in Kīpapa, O‘ahualua. They are researching the gendered impacts of mass incarceration in Hawai‘i and Oceania within anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and anti-carceral frameworks.

Domenica Gisella Calabrò (USP), Romitesh Kant (ANU), Jasbant Kaur (USP), Sidhant Maharaj (Fiji)

Behind the Mask: Intersection (In)visibility Of Indo-Fijian Queer Experiences

Queer Indo-Fijians occupy a precarious position as a minority within a minority, navigating a socio-political landscape fraught with racialised tensions and intersecting inequalities. Cultural and religious norms often enforce silence, leading to self-censorship and marginalisation. These dynamics are compounded by the historical erasure of queerness within Indo-Fijian identity, where it is often relegated to forms of entertainment rather than embraced as a lived reality. Indo-Fijian queer

experiences are further shaped by the pressures to embody resilience and maintain coherent identities tied to a history of indenture and socio-economic precarity. Despite the growth of the Fijian LGBTQI+ movement, which draws strength from a broader Pacific identity, Indo-Fijian queer activists face distinct barriers to participation in advocacy and political activism, including residual effects of political conflicts, and the overshadowing of their narratives by dominant voices in the movement. However, avenues for visibility are emerging in non-political spaces. Social media platforms like TikTok and Bollywood cinema's influence enable younger generations to redefine their identities and forge connections across the Indo-Pacific region. In certain religious contexts, forms of gender and sexual diversity are even being cautiously embraced, offering new possibilities for inclusion. Drawing on interviews, group discussions, and participant observation, this paper examines the intersecting barriers faced by the Indo-Fijian queer community. It explores their strategies for achieving recognition, visibility, and participation. By situating these experiences within Fiji's evolving socio-political and cultural landscape, the study highlights how Indo-Fijian queerness challenges and redefines notions of identity, belonging, and advocacy in the Pacific.

Domenica Gisella Calabrò holds a PhD in Cultural Anthropology and is Lecturer and Discipline Coordinator of Gender Studies at USP. Since 2021, she has been leading the study on Indo-Fijian queer experiences with gender studies graduates. Their early findings were published as a book chapter for the volume *Gender Erasure and Visibility*, part of the *Advances in Gender Series* by Emerald Publishing. The publisher awarded Domenica and her co-authors for Outstanding Author Contribution (Emeraldi Literati Award).

Romitesh Kant is completing his PhD at the Department of Pacific Affairs at ANU. He completed his Post Graduate Certificate in Gender Studies and Master of Arts (Politics and International Affairs) at USP.

Jasbant Kaur is completing her MA in Social Policy at USP and holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Gender studies and a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Policy from the same university. She is a human rights and feminist activist.

Sidhant Maharaj is completing his MA in Gender Studies at Birkbeck University of London as a Chevening scholar. He holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Gender Studies from USP.

Panel 5c Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

Caitlin Mollica (Chair), Newcastle

William Waqavakatoga

What Kind of Foreign Policy Do Pacific States Need in This Era of ‘Polycrisis’?

Fiji's “first Foreign Policy White Paper” (FPWP) was launched in September 2024 and puts Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka's proposal for an Ocean of Peace at its core for “a stable Indo-Pacific region”. But why did it take more than 50 years after gaining independence to launch a paper that has been described as “a landmark occasion in Fiji's history”? The need to discuss how this FPWP was shaped (influenced) and why it was produced is equally important to the text itself. A significant amount of recent research in the international relations (IR) field advances the proposition that domestic politics is typically a crucial part of the explanation for states' foreign policies. But most of this research is situated in political contexts and experiences of states outside of the Pacific Islands

region. The need for improved “political literacy” as a means of encouraging Pacific citizens to make contributions in shaping domestic and foreign policies is discussed also in this paper.

Liam Moore

A Bad Neighbour, An Isolated Island: Why Australia Wants to Believe it 'Controls' The Pacific

Australia needs the Pacific, as much as — if not more so — than the Pacific needs Australia. To preserve its ontological security and closely guarded identity as a ‘middle power,’ Australia has to place itself in relation to the ‘small island states’ as a patriarchal, colonial controller. Despite numerous discursive reconstructions of Australia’s role in the ‘Pacific family,’ coloniality and control have remained core to Australia’s conceptualisation of itself and the states and territories of the Blue Pacific.

To argue this, I utilise theories of relational narratives, ontological (in)security, and normative communities. It follows that Australia, in its understandings of diplomacy, foreign policy, and security, sees itself through the lens of the Pacific. A neo-colonial perception of the region is core to Australia’s identity as a regional hegemon. While rhetorically stating otherwise, Australia keeps itself either on the fringes or entirely outside the Pacific community. Without this exclusionary ‘exemptionalism,’ Australia’s identity would fracture and its own restrictions and dependency on colonial and neo-colonial powers would be laid bare. In identity terms this would be catastrophic — something to be avoided at all costs, even if the continuation conflicts with other state key interests, goals, and security.

This has implications — both for reflexive studies of Australia’s role in the Pacific, and as a cautionary tale for Pacific leaders navigating the choppy seas of geopolitics and neo-colonial practices. To instigate change, a rupturing of the colonial foundations of Australia’s identity is required. This is a challenging task that would inevitably begin with a reckoning of how the Indigenous peoples around Australia and the Torres Strait Islands fit into this plan, which may only then allow Australia to reconceptualise its broader role in the region.

Dr Liam Moore is a lecturer in International Politics and Policy at James Cook University, Australia. Liam’s work is grounded in a broad understanding of what International Relations is and should be. His research interests span from the intricacies of politics in Oceania, through emerging debates around climate mobilities, and across discourses of normative change, contestation, complexity and international orders.

George Carter

Oceanic Diplomacy for Peace

Oceanic diplomacy is emerging as a significant approach to fostering peace and cooperation in the Pacific region. This unique form of diplomacy draws on traditional practices and principles from Pacific Island cultures and societies, offering an alternative to conventional Western diplomatic approaches. By drawing on rich cultural resources and relational approaches, it offers a valuable complement to conventional diplomatic practices in addressing complex regional and global issues. It acknowledges the role of states, but emphasizes relationality and connections between political communities that share kinship, cultural ties, or cosmological beliefs. This relational approach allows for more nuanced and culturally appropriate engagement in four areas. Oceanic diplomatic practices have demonstrated effectiveness in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts within the region, the use of Māori and Melanesian diplomacy in Bougainville peace talks, the reconciliation efforts in New Caledonia 1990’s and the Samoan iboga ceremony to address historical injustices. In contemporary regional relations, Oceanic diplomacy has played a crucial role in managing relationships between

Pacific Island nations. For instance, it was instrumental in mediating a reconciliation between Vanuatu and Fiji within the Melanesian Spearhead Group in 2010. Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka has recently advocated for considering the Pacific as a "Zone of Peace". A concept to mitigate the effects of US-China competition in the region, to address local conflicts, such as those in Papua New Guinea and West Papua; and to promote stability and adherence to the rules-based international order. While Oceanic diplomacy offers unique advantages, it faces the challenge that Pacific perspectives are not drowned out or co-opted by larger powers; developing effective public diplomacy strategies to communicate Pacific worldviews; and balancing traditional practices with the demands of modern international relations. Despite these challenges, Oceanic diplomacy presents significant opportunities for enhancing peace, cooperation, and understanding in the Pacific region and beyond. By drawing on rich cultural resources and relational approaches, it offers a valuable complement to conventional diplomatic practices in addressing complex regional and global issues.

George Carter is the Deputy Head of Department / Senior Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs
I Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs.

Panel 5d Media, Memory and Knowledge

Heather Wrathall

Presented by Grant Wyeth

Pacific Youth, Civil Society and Media

Australia and the Pacific have a shared interest in a peaceful, resilient and prosperous region, and securing this future requires long-term vision, strategy and commitment. Prominent among the set of interconnected factors shaping the future of the Pacific region are media, young people and civil society:

- young people are vital to the continuing development of their nations' environments, economies, societies and cultures;
- a vibrant civil society makes for more effective and accountable government; and
- a healthy media plays a crucial role in underpinning democracy, normalising a plurality of views, enabling dialogue and serving the public interest.

Recognising the important contributions that these three groups can make should be a key regional focus for Australia. The result of four months of consultations with almost 60 experts from Australia and across the Pacific, this paper identifies opportunities for how Australia can engage with and support these vital sectors.

Gabrielle (Gabby) Tepora Tauiilili

Pasefika Presence: Magazines as a Space for Dreaming through Stories

How might a magazine differentiate itself in collecting, producing, and distributing Pacific Islander stories as compared to other print mediums? How might it uniquely create space for Pacific Islanders to not only share their art and stories, but also collectively (re)produce, negotiate, and/or challenge each others' dreams for themselves, their families, and their communities? And, how might that kind of space engage young Pacific Islander students and impact their capacity for dreaming? In this paper, the author discusses the motivation, purpose, and processes behind her creative master's project Pasefika Presence — an online, submission-based magazine aimed at centering and uplifting Pacific-Islander-produced stories. Reflecting on her personal experiences in 2023, as a teacher and as the producer of the first issue of Pasefika Presence, this paper explores the foundations for what initially inspired the creation of this magazine, followed by a tracing of how it has evolved over time. Throughout the paper, Langkilde traces what began as an enterprise mostly concerned with producing

representations of the Pacific that resisted against harmful, mainstream portrayals of our communities and has since evolved into a dynamic forum that aims to share diverse (and perhaps unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and/or challenging) understandings of culture, identity, and politics through the art of storytelling. With this evolving dynamic forum, this paper argues that Pacific-centered- magazines serve as critical platforms where Pacific Islanders can navigate, negotiate, and build collective visions for the future of their communities, and that they might serve as a very significant space for cultivating the capacity to dream in young Pacific Islanders.

Born and raised in American Samoa, Gabby is a Samoan storyteller and is pursuing a Master's degree in Pacific Island Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, interrogating the intersection of creative storytelling and the (re)production of culture, politics, and identity. She is also the executive editor of "Pasefika Presence", an online magazine that platforms Pacific Islander stories and art.

Opeta Alefaio

Knowing Thyself: The Role of Memory and Knowledge in Achieving Pacific Goals

"The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory. Antonio Gramsci – Prison Notebooks." Neglected inventories and eroding traces are indications of disappearing and depleted knowledge ecologies in the Pacific. This has direct implications for Pacific island countries ability to provide accurate public services, develop and execute relevant public policy, and achieving demonstrable levels of evidence-based governance. This paper argues that the Pacific does not give due attention to the role of memory and knowledge in achieving Pacific goals and addressing the short and long term needs of Pacific peoples.

Opeta is grateful to be a child of the Pacific ocean (Moana/Wansolwara), born and raised in Viti (Fiji) with Tuvaluan and Fijian ancestry. Fortunate to have served in the Fiji public service at the National Archives, he is now a PhD candidate at the Department of Pacific Affairs at the Australian National University, and contributes to boards of various Pacific centered information and heritage initiatives.

Session 6

Panel 6a Environment, Conservation and Disaster Management

Terence Wood (Chair), ANU

Luke James

World Heritage in the Pacific Islands: Contact Zones of Conservation, Cooperation and Contestation

It is increasingly recognised that international conservation governance operates at the intersection of diplomacy, aid and security. With the ratification of Nauru in July 2024, all Pacific Islands Countries are now states parties to perhaps the most well-known international conservation initiative, the World Heritage Convention. The Pacific Islands are also home to the largest World Heritage site in the world, Kiribati's Phoenix Islands Protected Area. The region has provided a distinctive contribution to an understanding of World Heritage through its environmental and cultural specificities—as home to among the highest proportion of indigenous peoples in the world, its cultural landscapes and seascapes have helped to break down the divide between nature and culture and move the concept beyond monuments and wilderness areas. Yet the diffusion of World Heritage through the Pacific Islands came relatively late, and has coincided with increased geopolitical interest in precisely the same distinctive features of the region: isolated coral shoals, diverse marine resources and evidence of

past exploration and occupation. This paper traces the emergence and circulation of the World Heritage concept in the Pacific Islands and its contact zones with areas of cooperation and contestation. These include forms of bilateral and multilateral financial and technical assistance, the climate crisis, claims of shared heritage, and broader economic, diplomatic and security agendas. Setting out the agenda for a proposed multi-year research program, the paper argues that World Heritage, as an example of international conservation governance, is a productive vector through which to understand multifarious phenomena at play in the relations between Pacific Island Countries, and between the region and outside actors.

Luke James is a heritage studies scholar, a lecturer in cultural heritage and museum studies at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia and author of *Experts in the World Heritage regime: Between protection and prestige* (2024, Palgrave Macmillan).

Yan Wu

The Current Status and Prospects of Cooperation in Disaster Reduction and Prevention Between China and Pacific Island Countries

As an important part of China's foreign cooperation, cooperation with Pacific Island countries in this field has gradually deepened. Pacific island countries are vulnerable to various natural disasters such as typhoons, tsunamis, and earthquakes. Therefore, strengthening cooperation in disaster reduction and prevention is crucial for their stability and development.

China has provided a solid foundation for cooperation in disaster reduction and prevention. For example, China has actively promoted cooperation projects and initiatives to enhance the disaster prevention and mitigation capabilities of Pacific Island countries. The cooperation between China and Pacific Island countries in disaster reduction and prevention covers a wide range of areas. This includes providing technical support for disaster monitoring and early warning systems, conducting training and exchanges for disaster management personnel, and supporting the construction of disaster prevention and mitigation infrastructure. China has also been cultivating fulcrum countries in the cooperation with Pacific Island countries. These countries play an important role in promoting regional cooperation and sharing experiences in disaster reduction and prevention. In addition to government-level cooperation, China has also broadened cooperation channels by promoting cooperation between enterprises, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions. This multi-faceted cooperation model has effectively promoted the implementation of disaster reduction and prevention cooperation projects.

In conclusion, the cooperation between China and Pacific Island countries in disaster reduction and prevention has achieved remarkable results. Looking ahead, there are broad prospects for further deepening this cooperation. By strengthening top-level design, enriching cooperation contents, cultivating fulcrum countries, and broadening cooperation channels, China and Pacific Island countries can jointly promote the sustainable development of disaster reduction and prevention in the region and contribute to regional stability and prosperity.

Yan Wu, Deputy Dean, Associate Professor, Department of Diplomacy, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.

Litia Veia-Simpson

Indigenous Resilience and Self-Determination for Sustainable Transition: A Model for Pacific SIDS

This study is the third in a series investigating whether circular economy principles can propel Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) toward achieving their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It introduces the Indigenous Triple Helix (ITH) model as an alternative framework for

guiding sustainable development transitions in Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Grounded in the resilience of Indigenous cultures, the ITH integrates spiritual authority, kinship-based land stewardship, and heritage preservation. Focusing on Tonga, this study draws on interdisciplinary research, including critical analysis of development narratives and ethnographic observation, to underscore the vital role of self-determination in achieving long-term sustainability. Unlike the traditional economistic based Triple Helix (TH) model, which emphasises institutional structures to drive innovation, the ITH underlines intrinsic authorities mobilising Indigenous endeavours. These authorities manifest as spheres of God, People/Land, and Heritage as opposed to Government-University-Industry, for the former. This provides for a culturally rooted approach to governance and development. By aligning development strategies with Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, the ITH empowers Pacific SIDS to preserve their social, environmental and heritage while addressing global challenges. The paper concludes by presenting the ITH as a blueprint for future sustainable development policies that prioritize resilience, autonomy, and Indigenous knowledge systems. Veja-Simpson investigates how circular economy can transform sustainability and resilience in Pacific SIDS. Her PhD was inspired by her work on a Green Climate Fund project while volunteering with VSA in the Cook Islands.

Panel 6b Peace, Security and Environmental Legacies

Lorenz Gonschor (Chair), USP

Kenji Cataldo

Makua, Piko of Peace: Media, Mo'olelo, and Militarism in Occupied Hawai'i

What can podcasts offer to grassroots political struggle in the Pacific? And how can the medium of the podcast reshape the role of a scholar in community? This paper highlights the potential of podcasts as empowering tools for grassroots storytelling, community archiving, and knowledge re-production in Oceania, reflecting on the author's creative masters project: a long-form narrative podcast series about Mākua Valley on O'ahu in Hawai'i. A sacred valley, home to a multiethnic ranching community in the early twentieth century, Mākua was appropriated by the US military during WWII and subjected to decades of live-fire training. The Kanaka Maoli-led organization Mālama Mākua currently leads the movement for the restoration and return of the valley. The podcast weaves together interviews with activists and scholars, archival research, mo'olelo kahiko, music, and ambient recordings in a multivocal narrative re-presenting a community's commitment to 'āina (land, "that which feeds"). The series aspires to listen to the voice of the valley and serve as a medium for the valley's call for protectors. Methodologically, this oral history project prioritizes aurality, in contrast to the written transcripts and volumes typical in the academy. Situating this project in literature on orality and representations of the past (Uriam 1995; Nogelmeier 2003; Mahuika 2019; Osorio 2021), this paper examines podcasting as a new way of doing oral history, archiving stories, and collaboratively constructing narratives. This project also contributes to our understanding of militarism and demilitarization in Oceania. Centered around Mālama Mākua's understanding of Mākua Valley as a piko (center, node) of peace-building and ho'iho'i ea (restoration of sovereignty), the podcast presents a narrative of Indigenous resistance to military occupation and of a community's insistence that the 'āina of Mākua must be restored, documenting the ongoing history of activism in real time to activate more people at this critical juncture.

Born in Japan and raised in the US, Kenji is a grassroots mediamaker and graduate student at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies (University of Hawai'i at Manoa) who researches militarism and demilitarization activism. Kenji co-hosts and produces the "Hawai'i Rising" podcast for the Hawai'i People's Fund and the "Oceania Currents" podcast for the Center for Pacific Islands Studies.

Teremoana Matepi

Provoking Values of Peace for Security in Oceania

This paper responds to the conference theme with three lead questions – 1. What are values of Peace? 2. What does a secure Oceania mean? 3. How will values and security achieve a Zone of Peace? Discussions on salient points arising from these questions are based on the findings of my doctoral research combined with my own lived experience as a community and environmental practitioner. At this critical juncture of history in the present, island communities are forced to contend with ocean discontents while the regional leadership outmanoeuvred by the coercive diplomacy of an alliance peddling a narrative that seeks dominance in the region. The challenges of entanglement in such destabilising geopolitical alliances calls for a disruption of this trend of historical path dependency in Pacific diplomacy. This paper outlines key requisites for a Peace Plan that draws on the fundamentals of Oceania's multicultures to provide a counter-hegemonic strategy to current and future discontents that compromise the ontological security of communities. I draw on Uapou, my field-tested values praxis framework (VPF) as a systematic programme of informal community education for improving public consultations and policy decisions. Given the diminishing practice in values, traditions, and norms, the VPF restores the mana of traditional community life while embracing the advantages of modern technology to enhance the meaningful participation of communities as protagonists of their own development. This organic growth is a systematic transformation process of village by village, nation by nation predicated on the commitment of communities to bringing to reality their values of spirituality and culture. Learning together and striving for this reality is a sustainable approach to Te-Moana-Nui-o-Kiva becoming a model of Peace. I outline the VPF process as a staged pathway to achieving the first milestone of political peace between regional leaders, development partners, and rim countries.

Teremoana Matepi is a Mangaian born and raised Cook Islander with extensive experience of working with Pacific communities and governments on NRM. Am about to complete and submit the PhD at ANU.

Michelle Kawēlauokealoha Wright

Lahainā Wildfires and Disappearing Waikīkī: The Mechanics of Settler-Induced Shoreline Catastrophes

The 2023 Lahainā wildfires killed over one hundred people and obliterated the historical town in one day. One island over, on O'ahu, researchers estimate that Waikīkī beaches as we know them today will disappear by 2050, with most of this well-known place being underwater shortly thereafter. These examples are both glimpses into the future of Hawai'i's coastlines and landscapes. This presentation explores the histories of these two shoreline areas, the mechanism through which they were transformed into tourist playgrounds, and the challenges faced today as a result. It will confront Hawai'i's long history of privileging settler and touristic landscapes and discuss how that history is reflected in the current socio-economic environment. Perhaps most importantly, this paper will also examine possible ways to disrupt this history and imagine a more diversified and equitable Hawai'i.

Michelle Kawēlauokealoha Wright is a Native Hawaiian Assistant Professor at the Kamakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She holds a PhD in Geography & Environment. Areas of Kawēlau's research include land tenure, land laws, Indigenous studies, and archival research.

Panel 6c Perspectives from PNG

Marion Crawshaw (Chair)

Michael Kabuni

The Role of Local Context in Transnational Regimes: AML in PNG

This paper examines the anti-money laundering and transnational frameworks adopted at the Pacific Islands Forum and their implementation in Papua New Guinea (PNG). It will focus on how local dynamics influence the effectiveness of the AML/CTF regimes in PNG.

Michael Kabuni is a PhD student at the Australian National University. His research investigates the ecosystem that affects the adoption, implementation, and impact of global regulations, using the AML/CTF regimes in PNG as a case study.

James Reid Stiefvater

***Otonomi Bilong Wanem?* Autonomy for what?: The Interfaces of Identity, Development, and Decentralisation in Papua New Guinea**

This thesis is about the challenges and negotiations in relationships between strongly held, dynamic, and multifaceted local identities with state politics and development policies and processes in Western Oceania. After 49 years of independence, Indigenous identities still run deep in Papua New Guinea, a resource-rich, multi-ethnic postcolonial state. These local ways of being regularly interface with state-led development, creating connections and tensions between citizens, provinces, and the national government. Focusing on the subnational entities of East New Britain Province and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, this paper uses Tok Stori methodology to centre Indigenous voices to explore the interfaces between multi-layered Indigenous identities, state development policies of redistribution of resources, and their role as drivers in movements for decentralisation of powers via distinct political status known as special autonomy. This examination of the roles of identities and how they are strategized within provincial and state governments will shed light on the contemporary dynamics of the state of Papua New Guinea as we ask the question, “autonomy for what?”.

James Stiefvater, PhD Candidate, School of People, Environment and Planning, Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Benjamin Reilly

Sports Diplomacy or Geo-Politics? Papua New Guinea's National Rugby League Bid

This paper examines the changing narratives and justifications behind a Papua New Guinea team joining the National Rugby League (NRL), an Australian-based professional sports competition. The Australian government has committed some \$A600 million dollars in public funding for a new NRL franchise in Papua New Guinea, likely starting in 2028. This paper examines the different narratives behind this unprecedented investment in 'sports diplomacy', including the promotion of nation-building within PNG, soft-power competition with China, post-colonial social development and 'justice', TV-rights and other economic payoffs, and enhanced PNG-Australia relations.

Prof Benjamin Reilly is an Adjunct Senior Fellow, East-West Center in Honolulu and a Non-Resident Senior Fellow, United States Studies Centre, University of Sydney.

Maholopa Laveil

Trends in Party Politics in PNG

Maholopa Laveil is an economics lecturer at the University of Papua New Guinea.

Panel 6d Roundtable: The Rise of Defence Diplomacy in the Pacific

As strategic rivalry between China and the United States has intensified in recent years, the Pacific Island region has become a key arena for this geopolitical competition. Within this contested arena, defence diplomacy has emerged since 2018 as a central mechanism for external partners to build relationships and influence, enable visibility and secure presence. This increased engagement has included bilateral and multilateral training exercises, military medical diplomacy, bilateral defence agreements, defence infrastructure and the provision of materiel aid such as equipment as well as other forms of engagement. In turn, Pacific Island countries have leveraged external interests to meet their own development and security needs and priorities. This panel will explore how defence diplomacy sits within the wider scope of Pacific security and how countries in the region manage diplomatic relationships. Speakers will present original research from the Defence Diplomacy in the Pacific 2018-2024 project (Reference GU 2023/863) funded by the United States Institute of Peace). Speakers will consider the following questions: does defence diplomacy add to Pacific communities' sense of safety and security? How has increased activity in the defence diplomacy arena prompted Pacific countries to develop or modify their operations and administrative practices? How does defence diplomacy influence perceptions of diplomatic relationships? This panel will also launch the Research Network on Pacific Security and Defence (RN-PSD).

David Capie (Chair), CSS, VUW

Anna Powles

Anna Powles, Associate Professor, Massey University, co-lead 'Pacific Defence Diplomacy Project' and co-director, Research Network on Pacific Security and Defence (RN-PSD). Powles' research focus on security and defence issues in the Pacific region. She sits on the steering committee for the University of the South Pacific "Pacific Geopolitics and Security Dialogue" and has published widely on Pacific security and defence issues.

Tess Newton Cain

Tess Newton Cain, Associate Professor (adj), Griffith University, co-lead 'Pacific Defence Diplomacy Project' and co-director, Research Network on Pacific Security and Defence (RN-PSD). Dr Tess Newton Cain is a dual citizen of Vanuatu and the United Kingdom and has over 25 years of experience living and working in the Pacific islands region. She has an established profile as an analyst of politics, diplomacy and geopolitics in the Pacific.

Teddy Win

Teddy Winn, PhD Scholar, James Cook University, Research Associate, 'Pacific Defence Diplomacy Project' and Research Network on Pacific Security and Defence (RN-PSD) member

Session 7

Panel 7a Paradoxes in Geopolitics and Political Economy

Sione Tekiteki (Chair)

Lili Song

Chagos in the South Pacific? The Principle of Self-Determination and the France-Vanuatu Dispute over the Matthew and Hunter Islands

The dispute over the Matthew and Hunter Islands (MHIs) has long been a constant strain on Vanuatu-French relations. The paper examines this dispute in light of the Chagos Advisory Opinion and a few other cases concerning territorial disputes. It first submits that sovereignty over the MHIs had never been raised until 1962, when, at the occasion of a private claim, France and Britain, the two administering powers of the New Hebrides at that time, considered the issue. The two states reached an agreement in 1965, asserting that the MHIs were part of the French colony of New Caledonia and not the British-French Condominium of the New Hebrides. This paper then considers the legal implications and lawfulness of the agreement, which did not take into account the local populations' will. Although there are some important differences between the Chagos and MHIs disputes, mainly due to the fact that the MHIs are uninhabited, the applicability of the right of self-determination to both cases is nevertheless beyond doubt. The paper contends therefore that the 1965 Agreement between France and Britain may constitute a violation of the right to self-determination of the people of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), who were not consulted on the decision to attach the MHIs to the French territory of New Caledonia, and suggests that there may be, however, some other legal principles under international law that can come into play. Finally, the paper contends that negotiated solutions, including a co-management agreement, could be a potential way forward for the parties involved in this complex dispute.

Dr Lili Song (presenter) is senior lecturer in law at Otago University. She previously taught law at University of the South Pacific Emalus campus in Vanuatu. Co-authors: Dr Géraldine Giraudeau is professor at University of Paris-Saclay (UVSQ), France. She previously taught law at University of New Caledonia. Dr Morsen Mosses is senior lecturer at law at University of the South Pacific Emalus campus in Vanuatu.

Elise Barandon

The Oceanian Paradox? Conceptualising the “Ocean of Peace” in an Ever-Militarizing Region

Beyond being a charming metaphor with vague epistemological contours, the Ocean of Peace concept is a powerful strategic signal to promote peace, in a region facing a highly-contested militarisation and an ever-growing number of defence diplomacy engagements. Particularly broadcasted by M. Rabuka at the last PIFLM53, it reflects a desire to reaffirm the sovereignty and independence of Pacific Island states. It seeks to ensure stability and coherence in a region marked by strategic competition, and sometimes deprived of its proactivity. However, how can we truly grasp this concept, led by the country with the biggest military in the region and currently led by a former coup maker, although « redeemed »?

Fiji aims to position itself as an international player, turning the region into a buffer zone of 32 million km². Through an Oceanian vision of peace and security, Fiji is reaffirming the geopolitical importance of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and giving a new impetus to the so-called Pacific Way. Beyond its regional ambitions, Suva therefore wishes to export its concept on a global scale to publicise the Pacific way of thinking and resolving conflict on the international scene.

This bears witness to the potential application and interconnection of this Oceanian concept with the various operational theatres, both regional and international. Although the concept is still in its infancy, it is therefore full of promises. However, just as the Blue Pacific narrative has been somehow entrapped by great powers, the Ocean of Peace concept it is already being taken up by extra-regional powers, as recently shown by China.

Giving visibility to this concept amounts to practicing a decentring approach to strategic studies. We hope to diversify and broaden the foundations and perspectives of international relations, way too often marked with the seal of western-centrism. Conceptualising the Ocean of Peace and unveiling its epistemological and ontological foundations could benefit IR by making it more inclusive and dynamic: it could offer broader conceptions of agency with material and ideational elements that includes resistance, normative action, and local constructions of global order.

Elise BARANDON is a 1st year PhD candidate in political science (international relations) at the University Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas (France), and an associate researcher at The Institute for Strategic Research (IRSEM). She is working on Oceanian countries' security strategies and narratives.

Philippa Louey

When Promises of Transformation are Anything but: Learnings from the Blue Economy in Oceania

Popularised among the global development and ocean governance communities through the 2010s, the blue economy has emerged as a charismatic vision for sustainable ocean development. Central to its appeal is a promise to transform human interactions with the ocean, championing a 'new paradigm' for oceans use that claims to nurture healthier and productive ecosystems with more equitable benefits for coastal communities. But what if this promise is not only false, but deceptive?

Building on doctoral research into Oceanian encounters with the blue economy over the last decade, this paper examines how discourses promising transformation can be perversely weaponised to uphold and refashion established systems of relations (in this case, neoliberal capitalism). Reflecting on longstanding debates among critical Pacific scholars and civil society advocates, I highlight how vigilance towards oft-touted promises of transformative development is not new within Oceania, but a mature body of thought that informs critique of the blue economy discourse and its sustainable oceans vision today. This paper draws such conversations into dialogue with Gramsci's framework of passive revolution to consider how promises of transformation can provide powerful tools for hegemonic refashioning—while recognising ongoing struggles and resistance to such political conservatism. The blue economy experiences of Oceanian development actors provide important lessons into the potential danger of charismatic discourses promising transformation and insight into issues of discontent that continue to frustrate sustainable ocean development efforts.

Philippa Louey is a PhD candidate in the Department of Pacific Affairs, Australian National University. Her research examines the politics of sustainable development discourses in Oceania, with a specific focus on the blue economy construct.

Panel 7b Roundtable: Postcolonial Relationships as Seen from the Islands

Decolonisation is not completed. There are about 40 island communities across the globe who have a colonial history and yet most of them continue to have a constitutional bond in one form or another with the seven former colonial metropolises. These constitutional bonds vary within each postcolonial realm. For example, Niue and the Cook Islands opted for free association with Aotearoa New Zealand, while Tokelau has not. Australia's "external territories" of Norfolk Island, Christmas Island, and Cocos (Keeling) Islands share the same legal name, but governance arrangements in all three differ.

Much has been written about "freely associated" and "non-sovereign" island territories and their relationships with their former colonial metropolises – mostly by people based in metropolitan centres. Since late 2024, a global research project of Anglophone, Francophone, Dutch, and Danish researchers have been working with teams of friends and colleagues living in these 40 island communities to detail views about their relationships with the metropole.

The research project has three phases. In phase zero, the researchers have summarised six globally recurring patterns in publications about the metropole-island relationships, publications that are

mostly from the metropole's perspective. In phase one, teams in island communities consider this summary and respond by correcting, editing, or expanding these patterns, based on their lived experiences. In a second phase, the island teams share their responses across the globe, looking for shared experiences as island communities. To what extent can island communities as diverse as Norfolk Island, the Cook Islands, and, say, the Falkland Islands the Faroe Islands, Palau, or Aruba, benefit from each other's experiences in decolonising their relationship with their metropolises?

In this presentation, representatives from Norfolk Island, the Cook Islands, and the global team share their early findings.

Julija Sardelić (Chair), VUW

Anita French

Anita French (Norfolk Island), Ambassador, Norfolk Island People for Democracy (NIPD).

Tina Newport

Tina Newport (Cook Islands), President of Te Vairanga Kite Pakari, the Cook Islands Research Association.

Gerard Prinsen

Gerard Prinsen (Aotearoa New Zealand) works at Massey University in the Development Studies programme.

Panel 7c Roundtable Geo-Strategic Rivalry in the Pacific in the Age of Trump II

Recent years have seen an enhanced international rivalry in the Pacific, with Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Nauru switching ties from Taiwan to China, Australia beefing up its security ties with the Pacific Island nations (including a major shift to concessional lending) and the United States under Biden renewing its compacts with FSM, Palau and the Marshall Islands. However, China's aid to the region tailed off after 2016, with only an anaemic post -pandemic recovery, and Trump has temporarily halted American aid. In this session, regional specialists talk about the implications of these international changes for the Pacific, how they influence domestic politics and whether the island nations can sustain some neutrality in the face of these external pressures.

Jon Fraenkel (Chair), VUW

Tessie Lambourne (Leader of the Opposition, Kiribati)

Transform Aqorau (Vice Chancellor, Solomon Islands National University)

Kaliopate Tavola

Kaliopate Tavola is a Fijian Agricultural economist, diplomat, and politician, who was his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs from 2000 to 2006.

Graeme Smith (ANU)