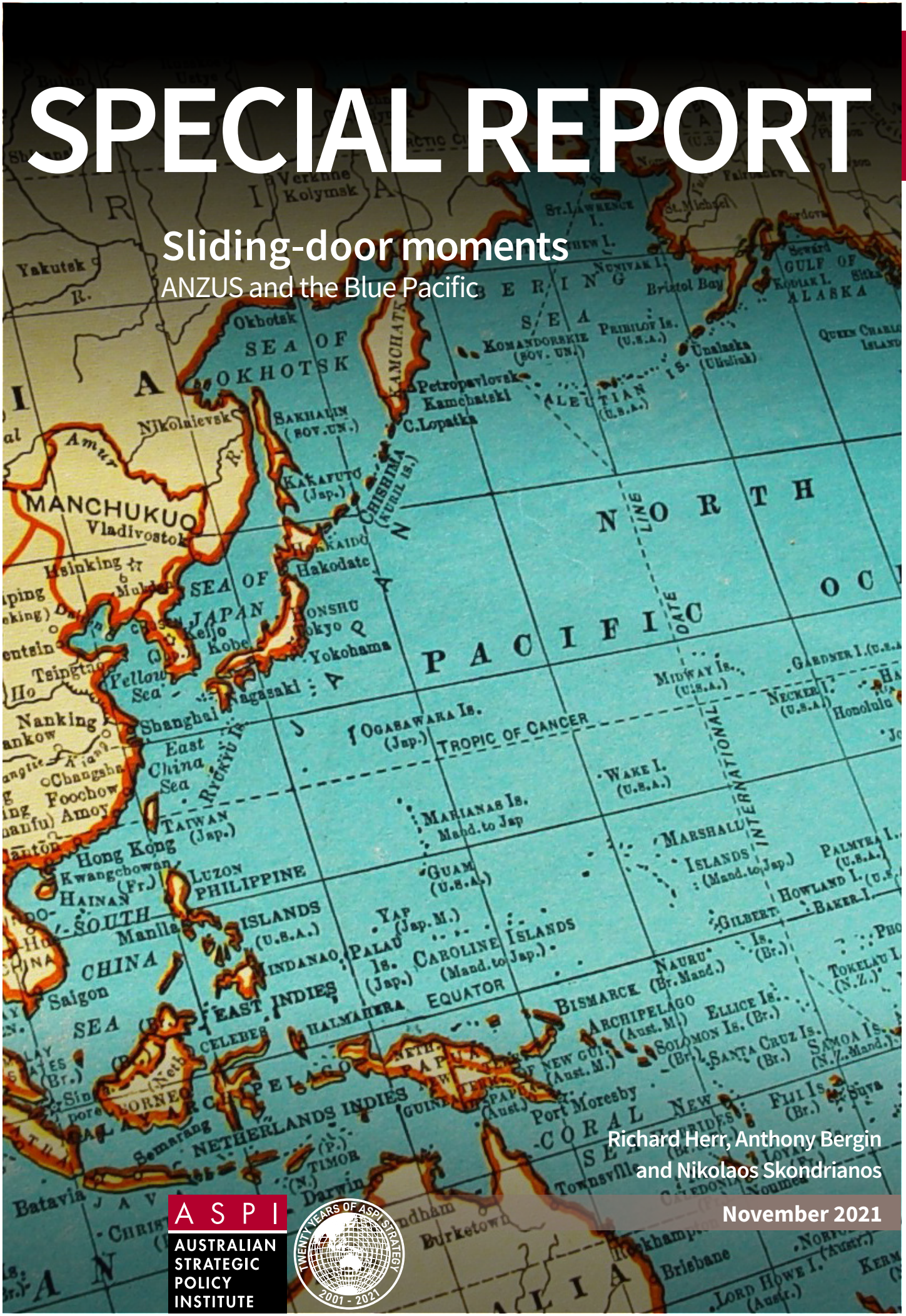


SPECIAL REPORT

Sliding-door moments

ANZUS and the Blue Pacific

Richard Herr, Anthony Bergin
and Nikolaos Skondrianos

November 2021

ASPI
AUSTRALIAN
STRATEGIC
POLICY
INSTITUTE

ASPI

About the authors

Dr Richard Herr OAM is the academic director of the parliamentary law, practice and procedure course in the Faculty of Law at the University of Tasmania. He has served as a consultant on regional architecture to the governments of the Pacific Islands on various occasions since 1976. Professor Herr has held visiting positions in Fiji, Hawaii and New Caledonia and the USSR, including the posts of Honorary Director of the Centre for International and Regional Affairs at the University of Fiji and Adjunct Professor of Governance and Ethics at the Fiji National University.

Dr Herr's recent ASPI Special Report, *Chinese influence in the Pacific Islands: the yin and yang of soft power* proposed both appropriate responses to Chinese efforts for influence through soft power and means for better leveraging Australian soft power in the region, online.

Dr Anthony Bergin is a senior fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Dr Bergin has served as consultant to public and private sector clients in the Pacific and is co-author of the ASPI Special Report, *Ocean horizons: Strengthening maritime security in Indo-Pacific island states*, online.

Nikolaos Skondrianos is the coordinator of ASPI's Defence, Strategy and National Security program.

About ASPI

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute was formed in 2001 as an independent, non-partisan think tank. Its core aim is to provide the Australian Government with fresh ideas on Australia's defence, security and strategic policy choices. ASPI is responsible for informing the public on a range of strategic issues, generating new thinking for government and harnessing strategic thinking internationally. ASPI's sources of funding are identified in our Annual Report, online at www.aspi.org.au and in the acknowledgements section of individual publications. ASPI remains independent in the content of the research and in all editorial judgements. It is incorporated as a company, and is governed by a Council with broad membership. ASPI's core values are collegiality, originality & innovation, quality & excellence and independence.

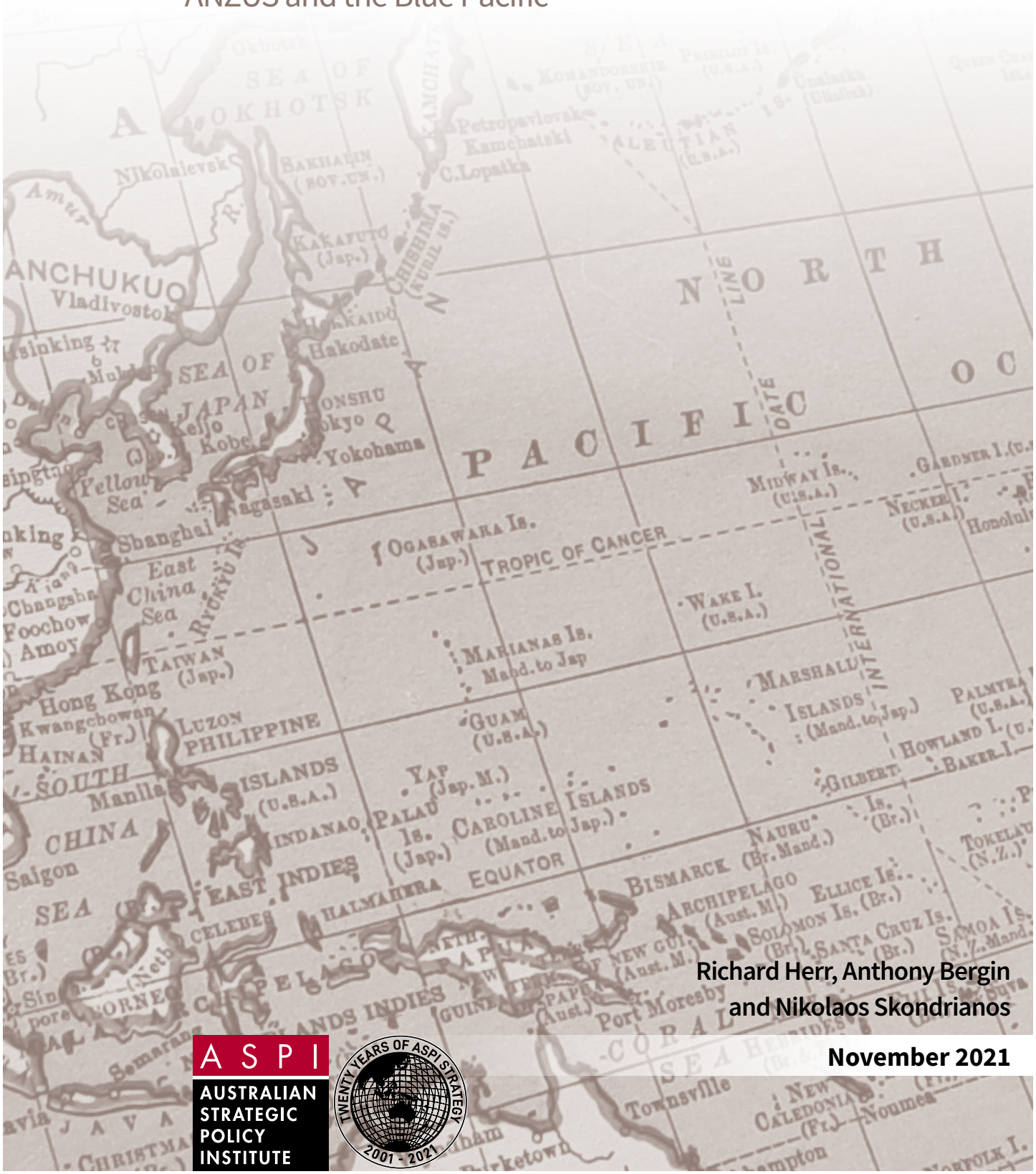
ASPI's publications—including this paper—are not intended in any way to express or reflect the views of the Australian Government. The opinions and recommendations in this paper are published by ASPI to promote public debate and understanding of strategic and defence issues. They reflect the personal views of the author(s) and should not be seen as representing the formal position of ASPI on any particular issue.

No specific sponsorship was received to fund production of this report.

Cover image: 1942 map of the Asia-Pacific region, iStockphoto, ftwitty.

Sliding-door moments

ANZUS and the Blue Pacific



Richard Herr, Anthony Bergin
and Nikolaos Skondrianos

ASPI
AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE

TWENTY YEARS OF ASPI STRATEGY 2001 - 2021

November 2021

First published November 2021

Published in Australia by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute

ASPI
Level 2
40 Macquarie Street
Barton ACT 2600
Australia

Tel + 61 2 6270 5100
Fax + 61 2 6273 9566
Email enquiries@aspi.org.au
www.aspi.org.au
www.aspistrategist.org.au

Facebook.com/ASPI.org

@ASPI_org

Contents

Executive summary

Most of the activities celebrating the 70th anniversary of the signing of the ANZUS Treaty slid quietly past its significance to the Pacific Island region. That wasn't an oversight.

Despite the centrality of the Pacific Islands to the treaty, virtually all speeches and anniversaries marking the treaty, or the alliance it spawned, have failed to reflect on the relevance of the region to the treaty's three parties.

But the treaty was relevant to the region in 1951. It remains so today.

This report has two aims. The first is to examine the key 'sliding-door' moments that have shaped the trajectory of ANZUS in the Pacific Island region over the past 70 years.

The dramatic changes in the geostrategic Indo-Pacific theatre over those decades were a profound, and at times determinative, influence on the willingness of the Pacific states to accept that they were part of a supportive security community under an ANZUS umbrella.

The ANZUS Treaty wasn't intended to defend the Pacific Islands as a region, or even to identify it as a specific security theatre as NATO did for the North Atlantic.

It served a specific political purpose: to win Australian and New Zealand support for the soft peace treaty with Japan.

When that was accomplished, it relaxed into an 'agreeable club for the occasional exchange of views' for several decades while the heavy lifting for defence shifted to the broader and more robust shoulders of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

Except for a brief flirtation by Australia to intervene in the West New Guinea conflict, there was no perceived need to tie ANZUS to the Pacific Island region or the defence of its peoples from aggression.

A swelling number of independent states, the collapse of SEATO and an apparent Soviet interest in the South Pacific brought about a Cold War rethink. The Pacific Islands acquired a cogency for ANZUS that had previously not been recognised.

In the event, the expected challenge from the USSR failed to materialise, but the prospect left in its wake approaches, attitudes and language regarding regional security that has coloured thinking to the present day. That Cold War–inspired analysis tended more to co-opt than consult Islands' views in preserving ANZUS security objectives.

The tearing down of the Berlin Wall and subsequent disintegration of the USSR put the region again on the backburner of ANZUS security calculations about extra-regional threats.

Subsequent intra-regional antagonisms over such issues as fisheries, nuclear policy and climate change contributed to breaking down the sense of shared interests both within the alliance and between alliance members and the regional states.

The consensus on regional security among the three ANZUS states was further compromised when the ANZUS Council ceased to meet from 1984, following the exclusion of US warships from New Zealand ports.

As China has begun to exert a muscular presence in the Pacific Island region, ANZUS now faces a crisis of relevance far more real than anything experienced in its entire 70 years of existence.

China's rapid expansion of economic and political influence across the region is a threat to the West's exclusive sphere of influence in the region.

For their part, some regional states are openly querying whether the price of belonging to a regional security community accommodating ANZUS security concerns will be too high if it costs them their expanding relations with China.

The second aim of this report is to consider how the echoes of past sliding-door moments are influencing the options for ANZUS and the region in meeting the current security challenges in a new and complex geopolitical environment.

The first test will be whether ANZUS has the resolve to develop a coherent position on its role in the region. It's unclear how the dramatic emergence of AUKUS and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue will affect ANZUS security responses to China's role in the region.

Given the centrality of the region to the ANZUS partners' individual security interests, a common collective alliance position is very much to their advantage, if it can be found.

The second test will be the willingness of the Forum Island states to support an ANZUS view of regional security: the region has stressed that it doesn't wish to be a catspaw in the new complex geopolitical environment.

Equally, the regional states fear the loss of agency at the Indo-Pacific level of decision-making if their region is rolled into the agenda of that security super-arena.

There's an opportunity of relevance here for ANZUS. The alliance is the only formal security arrangement that could serve to protect and project the Forum Island states' concerns in the larger security arena of the Indo-Pacific.

The Pacific states would resist any claim that any state or association could trespass on their capacity to protect their own national and regional interests, but they have appreciated the support of international champions who take up their cause.

There are inherent constraints on the alliance finding a role in Pacific Island regional security:

- There's an almost complete lack of opportunities for formal linkages between ANZUS as a defence alliance and the independent states of the region, most of which have no defence infrastructure.
- ANZUS isn't a humanitarian aid delivery agency, yet the region's overwhelming security needs—at least in peacetime—are for human security.
- The treaty was framed to address the threat of aggression *through* the region, not directly *at* the regional states.
- The three ANZUS members individually have long and close relationships with the region and its member states, but distinguishing between national interest and alliance policy hasn't always been clear.
- Equally, the depth of the civil relationship each ANZUS member has with the Pacific Island region has blurred the distinctions between civil and security motivations for assistance.

Recognising those constraints, this report finds that ANZUS can continue to have a useful role in meeting the mix of security needs for both the alliance and the region's states and territories.

Recommendations to help protect shared security values while navigating through the present sliding-door moment include the following:

- Restore the ANZUS Council as an effective policy directorate for the alliance.
- Use the treaty's Article VIII to create a more inclusive 'ANZUS Plus' for consultations on regional security.
- Defuse nuclear irritants as a source of intra-alliance tensions, including by region-friendly measures such as the US signing the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty protocol.
- Identify and protect 'red-line' interests before they become geostrategically contentious.
- Advance and protect the Pacific's digital infrastructure, including subsea cables and related infrastructure.
- Engage effectively with the regional states to protect the rules-based international order at the regional level.
- Work with the regional private sector and civil society to identify and resist economic coercion.

While the alliance itself doesn't deliver aid, there are some areas in which the three partners can individually or collectively support projects that build security within the region.

The following should be prioritised:

- The Pacific Islands Forum's blue–green economy aims could be significantly advanced by a major infrastructure investment in national schemes to upgrade inter-island transport, such as a 'Sea Highways' project.
- Support the clarification of maritime boundaries and the stabilisation of baselines, including necessary engineering support, to minimise internal and external sources of conflict.
- Support the Pacific Islands Forum's Blue Pacific initiative more strongly by collaborating to achieve synergies from the relevant elements of the alliance partners' Step-Up, Pacific Reset and Pacific Pledge policies.

We note that it isn't yet clear whether the creation of AUKUS will strengthen or weaken the role of ANZUS in regional security. The Australian decision to acquire nuclear-powered submarines will add sensitivity to tying Pacific Island regional security to ANZUS arrangements. However, uncertainties about the direction of AUKUS will take time to clarify.

We believe our findings are valid for the present sliding-door moment.

Introduction

Nations commemorate the anniversaries of important events for a variety of reasons, including to memorialise dates of significance to the nation, to honour past sacrifices of those who served the nation, to reflect on what has changed and to reaffirm commitments for the future.

All those reasons have been on display as Australia and the US mark the 70th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty (Figure 1), although, reflecting the current state of the alliance, less so in New Zealand.

Figure 1: Prime Minister Scott Morrison reflects on 70 years of ANZUS history

Source: US Secretary of Defense, online.

Understanding the past can be essential to renewing pledges of alliance with full appreciation of the rationale for the partnership. This report focuses on ANZUS in the Pacific Islands region. It considers how past critical decisions and events have shaped future ANZUS options in the Pacific.

Just as ANZUS has evolved from being the only mutual security agreement focusing on the region to now being a strand in an alphabet soup of security-related arrangements, the region itself has grown and developed. The role ANZUS can play today is shaped not just by these new circumstances but also by the role it might have played.

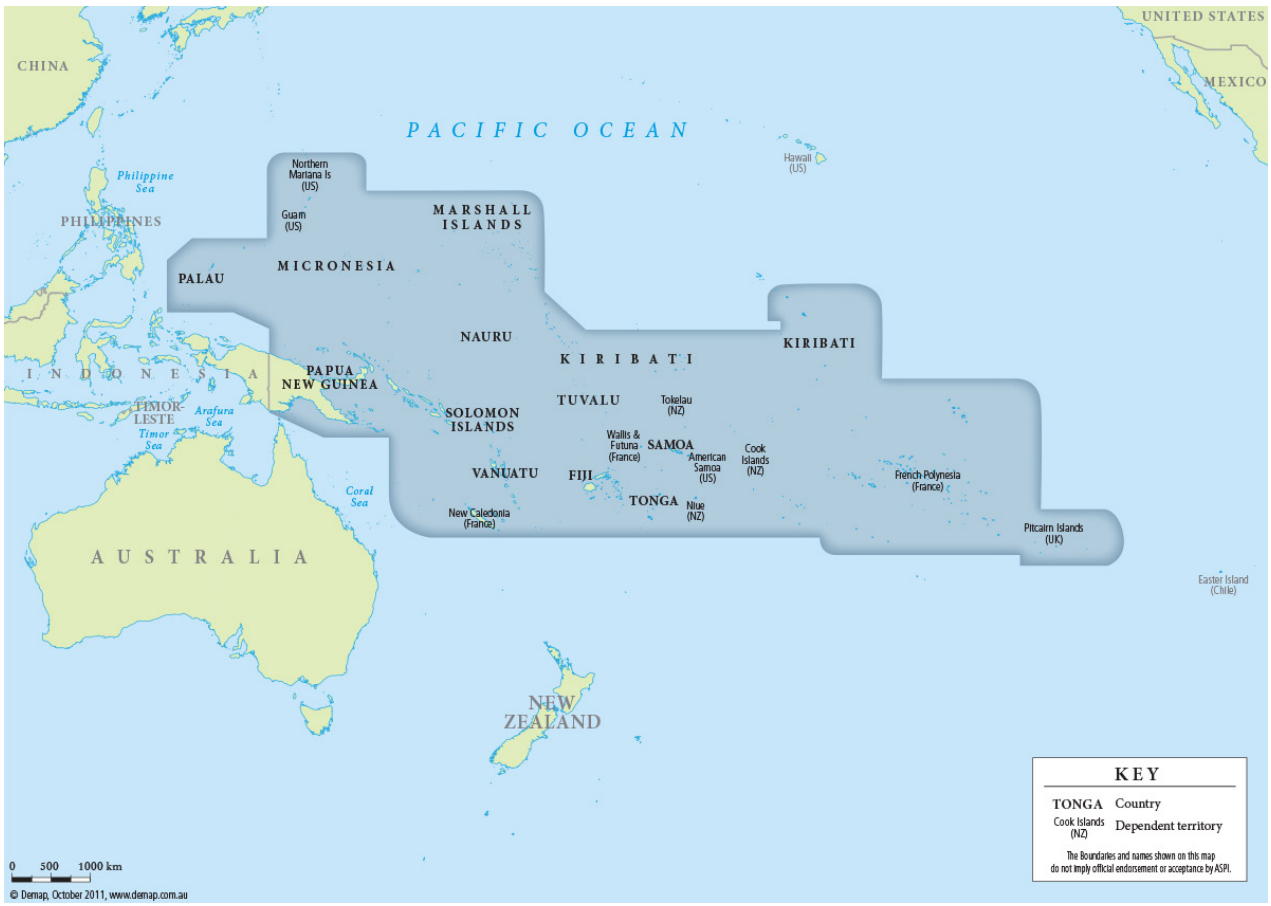
Adopting the artifice of 'sliding doors', we first review some major decision points to consider how the trajectory of ANZUS might have been different today in the Pacific Island region had the allies chosen a different path. Reviewing some key decisions against the possible consequences of the sliding door not walked through gives perspective on the evolution of the treaty.

The goal of this historical analysis is to shed light on current options in a region where all three ANZUS partners are pursuing initiatives to build closer relationships in the region to meet new geostrategic challenges.

The potential for their success will be defined, in part, by the turning points in the seven decades of ANZUS that established the grounds for mutually shared security interests.

Although there's a perception that the alliance has had little relevance to the Pacific Island countries (PICs), there have been a number of occasions when decisions made were directly germane to the Islands and their security (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Map of Pacific Island region (members of the Pacific Community)



All three ANZUS partners have long assumed that their relationship with the region was embedded in a ‘security community’: a group of states so close in fellow feeling, trust and common interests that they would not or could not present a threat to other members of the community.

While the existence of a security community across the region would serve the interests of the contracting parties, there have been increasing signs that that assumption isn’t so readily shared by the PICs.

This report highlights several decision points at which the ANZUS processes did serve or might have served to develop and reinforce feelings of mutual and shared security interests with the PICs.

Those turning moments (rarely were there single points) are illustrative of the significance of the decisions that were made at the time, not necessarily of the likelihood that another path might have been taken.

Given the dominance of the security concerns of the Western powers, the pivotal decisions taken haven’t necessarily included input from or even the awareness of the PICs or their interest in the matter being resolved.

All the sliding-door moments canvassed in this report have cumulatively contributed to the current regional security environment. Each of the ANZUS states, individually or collectively, has undertaken initiatives to promote a shared sense of being part of a security community with the PICs in this altering strategic milieu.

Their future success does depend, in part, on appreciating the past to successfully negotiate the next sliding-door moment for ANZUS and the region’s pursuit of the ‘Blue Pacific continent’.

The ANZUS Treaty and the Pacific Islands

In a speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of ANZUS, then Prime Minister John Howard emphasised that ANZUS had become a vital, comprehensive and evolving security relationship.[1] The reason for changing and adapting the alliance was to defend its continuing relevance to Australia. But that didn't address the relevance of the treaty, and the alliance it forged, for our neighbours in the Pacific Island region, despite their centrality in the treaty.

There are many grounds for questioning the pertinence of the ANZUS Treaty to the South Pacific region. No regional state has acceded to the pact or signed any protocol to associate itself with it.

Notwithstanding the comprehensive geographical sweep of its scope, the treaty did not, in fact, provide protection to all of the territories of the region in 1951. Even this year's report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's Inquiry into Australia's defence relationships with Pacific island nations didn't refer to ANZUS.[2]

But the treaty is almost as relevant to the region today as it was 70 years ago, and may even be more meaningful than the alliance itself. For example, North Korean news outlets announced in August 2017 that the hermit kingdom was considering a missile attack on the US territory of Guam.[3] Had the attack occurred, it almost certainly would have triggered Article V of the ANZUS Treaty, which states:

> an armed attack on any of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of any of the Parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific.

But what of New Zealand's current back-seat role in the alliance? Were a 1983 Grenada-style hostile intervention in Tokelau to arise, Wellington would still be entitled under the same article to invoke the treaty. Despite qualms as to New Zealand's alliance rights and responsibilities, Wellington hasn't denounced the treaty, and the 1951 obligations remain formally intact.

The potential Pacific Island regional triggers for invoking the ANZUS Treaty have worn fairly well over the past 70 years. The US has the largest number of dependencies: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam, as well as eight uninhabited minor islands claimed mainly under the 1856 Guano Act.

Australia has two external territories in the Pacific: the Coral Sea Islands and Norfolk Island. Christmas Island is currently listed as an Indian Ocean territory but was on the border of the World War II Southwest Pacific theatre. Tokelau is New Zealand's one remaining dependency still covered by the 1951 provisions.

Postcolonial defence obligations could also serve as a pretext for activating treaty processes. The US has free association agreements with three former territories: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau. New Zealand has a similar relationship with two: the Cook Islands and Niue.

While their specific defence ties don't necessarily bring them under the ANZUS umbrella, any attack on those states would be likely to involve the armed forces of the protector state and might in turn trigger Article V requests for assistance from the other two powers.

Because Article V provisions broaden the reach of the treaty beyond territory to 'armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific', possible ANZUS triggers extend to state-flagged vessels anywhere in the Pacific area.

An attack on even civilian aircraft or vessels flagged to any of the ANZUS allies and servicing the region's tourism industry thus could serve to activate a treaty request.

Arrangements such as the US's 11 'shiprider' agreements with the independent PICs could in fact involve the PICs directly. The program allows PIC law enforcement officials to operate at sea to execute local resource-protection or other legal objectives using US Coast Guard or Navy vessels as platforms.

Similarly, a foreign adversary using armed force to defend its vessels accused of poaching by PIC officers on a US Navy vessel could provoke an ANZUS incident.

The ANZUS alliance and the Pacific Islands

As Peter Jennings has argued, ANZUS today encompasses much more than the terms of the treaty, having evolved over time to include a wider engagement well beyond its initial scope or intention.[4] ANZUS has been shaped from the beginning more by extra-regional than by regional events. The PICs' lack of agency in the security dynamics of the Pacific Island region was a major contributing factor.

Factors such as the PICs' small size and limited resources and nation building have remained continuing constraints.

The alliance wasn't designed to provide for the security of the islands but rather for the member colonial powers. But there's long been an assumption that the security aspirations of the three allies would be compatible with the broader security needs of the region or at a minimum not intrinsically inimical to those of the PICs.

As the following sliding-door moments show, the PICs didn't always share that belief. Trying to maintain the notion of shared security interests was itself challenging at times and introduced significant stresses into the alliance and between the alliance and the PICs.

Sliding door 1: ANZUS on the American plan

While the US regarded the signing of the ANZUS Treaty in September 1951 as the start of a new security relationship, for Australia and New Zealand, it was a significant sliding-door moment. The two antipodean powers traced their vision of the regional security back seven years to the Australia – New Zealand Agreement of 1944 (the ANZAC Pact).[5]

That wartime bilateral agreement was embedded in a broader package of postwar reconstruction measures for the region. They included two specific regional proposals. The pact made a claim for a 'zone of defence … stretching through the arc of islands, North and North East of Australia, to Western Samoa and the Cook Islands'.

The second was an association tentatively named the South Seas Regional Commission, the aims of which would include the political development of the native peoples. Participants in a conference to discuss the problems of security, postwar development and native welfare were to include Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and the US.

The pact's overreach didn't secure the hoped-for seat at the postwar negotiating table or the general regional security alliance. The creation of the regional humanitarian organisation, the South Pacific Commission (SPC), did provide for some benefits by formalising linkages with states identified as important to Australia's and New Zealand's presence in the region.

However, the SPC was denied a political role, mainly by the three imperial states that fought in the Pacific War and expected to retain their colonies. Australia and New Zealand had hoped, prophetically, that political development would contribute to regional stability. The seeds of that 1947 disagreement bore divisive fruit in 1971 with the establishment of the South Pacific Forum.

Despite Australia's attempt to buy American support for a defence alliance with the offer of the naval station on Manus Island, Washington resisted until after the communist victory in China and the outbreak of war in Korea.

Accepting that Australia and New Zealand would need guarantees against a resurgent Japan, the US agreed to an alliance in return for their support for a peace treaty with Japan (Figure 3). However, the Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (ANZUS) wasn't to be the grand and hard defence treaty proposed in 1944.[6]

Figure 3: John Foster Dulles signs the Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (the ANZUS Treaty)

Source: Harry S Truman Library and Museum, online.

The membership was limited to only three contracting parties. The UK was excluded despite the importance of Fiji, the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands Protectorate to Australia's identified zone of security.[7]

The US, ironically, was concerned at being drawn into defending Britain's colonies in Southeast Asia. Moreover, if the UK were to join the proposed alliance, the Truman administration feared that other weaker regional colonial powers would seek membership.[8]

The 1944 pact made reference to France, the Netherlands and Portugal. Article VIII didn't provide for an expanded membership, but it empowered the governing council to maintain a 'consultative relationship' with relevant states and organisations.

Most critically for Australia in this made-in-America treaty, the ANZUS agreement didn't provide for any of the NATO-style automatic guarantees that the two antipodean states expected. Article III obligated the parties only to 'consult together' whenever any of them perceived a threat.

The extent of that limitation became clear to the Menzies government in 1962. Australia, concerned by Indonesia's military attempts to take over the Dutch colony of West New Guinea (West Irian), turned to the US, expecting support under ANZUS obligations. Washington demurred. The Dutch colony wasn't within the pact's geographical scope, and the obligation to 'consult' wouldn't be activated unless Australia put its troops in harm's way.

Sliding door 2: A region divided—PICs and FICs?

The creation of the ANZUS Treaty scarcely reflected Australian or New Zealand wartime aspirations for Pacific security. The establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 came closer to the general security guarantee that the two had wanted in 1944.

Consequently, ANZUS drifted into the policy background for the following decade, being 'little more than an agreeable club for the occasional exchange of views between the United States and its two allies'.[9]

Although the West New Guinea episode underscored the severe limitations of the treaty guarantees, the incident had an unexpected but significant consequence for Pacific Islanders' views on regional security.

Fiji's future prime minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, was moved by stories of distress among delegates to the 1962 SPC, who wept at losing their relationship with fellow Islanders due to the impending handover of the colony to Indonesia.

Mara saw the episode as a cynical display of power politics without regard for the interests of the Pacific peoples.[10] When he attended the 1965 meeting of the regional assembly, Mara began a process of reform to give the dependent peoples a political voice on matters affecting their region.

Mara was aided by the successful three-year insistence of the Western Samoans on acceding to the 1947 Canberra Agreement that had established the SPC. The hard-line colonial administrations had opposed the Samoan claim. They argued that New Zealand's former UN mandate shouldn't serve as a governing commissioner while being a beneficiary of the SPC's activities.

Samoa's success in 1965 set the precedent that every colony within the ambit of the SPC could become a full member of the treaty at independence while remaining a beneficiary of the SPC's work program.

For the next five years, the winds of change gathered force across the region as the Cook Islands, Nauru, Tonga and Fiji secured independence or autonomy. However, the colonialist veto that prevented the SPC having a political development mandate in 1947 became an increasing irritant.

The PICs wanted to address the threats to the regional environment posed by French nuclear testing at the Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls in French Polynesia. France insisted that this was a security matter outside the non-political mandate of the SPC. Fellow nuclear powers, the UK and the US, sided with France, leading to a confrontation on the issue at the 1970 South Pacific Conference meeting in Suva.

The following year, the five independent regional states asked New Zealand and Australia to join them in Wellington to discuss the establishment of a regional body with the competence to discuss all matters of concern to the region.

The result was the South Pacific Forum, which later became the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)—a new regional association of independent states (Figure 4). The US initially regarded the new body more as an expression of Commonwealth solidarity than a split in the ANZUS consensus on security policy in the region.

Figure 4: South Pacific Forum meeting, August 1971

Source: 'ArchivesNZ', Flickr, online.

The Pacific Island region includes the 22 PICs as defined by the ambit of the SPC. The SPC also included Australia, France, New Zealand, the UK and the US as members. The members of the PIF (the Forum Island countries, or FICs) are the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (Table 1). Australia and New Zealand are founding members of the PIF.

However, the separation between the PICs and the FICs was a wedge that was to inflict serious damage to ANZUS, both within the region and to the alliance itself.

New Zealand and Australia were now inside a regional body that had agency and its own voice on regional security.

Table 1: The PICs and the FICs

Country	Capital	Land (sq. km)	EEZ (sq. km)	Population	Political status
American Samoa	Pago Pago	199	404,391	56,800	Dependent territory (US)
Cook Islands	Rarotonga	237	1.8 million	15,300	Freely associated state (NZ)
Federated States of Micronesia	Pohnpei	701	2.9 million	105,500	Freely associated state (US)
Fiji	Suva	18,333	1.3 million	895,000	Republic
French Polynesia	Papeete	3,521	4.8 million	278,900	Overseas collectivity in French Republic
Guam	Hagåtña	541	221,504	176,700	Dependent territory (US)
Kiribati	Tarawa	811	3.6 million	118,700	Republic
Nauru	Yaren	21	320,000	11,700	Republic
New Caledonia	Noumea	18,600	1.4 million	273,000	Special collectivity (France)
Niue	Alofi	259	390,000	1,600	Freely associated state (NZ)
Northern Mariana Islands	Saipan	457	758,121	56,600	Dependent territory (US)
Palau	Koror	444	600,900	17,900	Freely associated state (US)
Papua New Guinea	Port Moresby	462,840	3.1 million	8,934,500	Constitutional monarchy
Pitcairn Islands	Adamstown	47	842,000	50	Dependent territory (UK)
Republic of the Marshall Islands	Majuro	181	2.1 million	54,600	Freely associated state (US)
Samoa	Apia	2,934	198,000	198,600	Republic
Solomon Islands	Honiara	28,230	1.6 million	712,100	Constitutional monarchy
Tokelau	Atafu, Fakaofo & Nukunonu	12	319,031	1,500	Dependent territory (NZ)
Tonga	Nuku'alofa	749	700,000	99,800	Kingdom
Tuvalu	Funafuti	26	757,000	10,600	Constitutional monarchy
Vanuatu	Port Vila	12,281	680,000	294,700	Republic
Wallis and Futuna	Mata-Utu	142	258,269	11,400	Dependent territory (France)

Sources: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, country and region fact sheets, online; Central Intelligence Agency, World factbook, online; Sea Around Us project, online; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2020 pocket statistical summary; online.

Sliding door 3: Strategic denial—red sails in the sunset?

The ANZUS alliance was slow to react to the significance of independence in the region. Extra-regional threats were so negligible that most of the states secured independence with no military capacity for self-defence. Of the three colonies under the 1951 umbrella, only Papua New Guinea had a military force at independence. Samoa and Nauru did not.

None of the three had any mutual security agreement either with its former metropole or another state or alliance. Despite the clear evidence that the PICs would resist external security activity, such as nuclear testing, the ANZUS powers continued to assume that there was a shared security perspective with the FICs.

A series of mid-1970s events disturbed that naivety and brought ANZUS to the fore in regional affairs. The catalyst was Tonga's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in April 1976.

For the ANZUS allies, the development was particularly alarming against the background of the impending collapse of SEATO in the wake of the end of the Vietnam War. Britain had already announced its withdrawal from east of Suez, and Nixon's 1969 Guam Doctrine had signalled that regional allies would have to carry greater responsibility for their own defence.

The 1976 ANZUS Council marked the first significant consideration of the Pacific Islands since the 1962 disagreement on West New Guinea. Without mentioning the USSR, it made decisions that drew the region into the US policy of containment variously described as strategic denial or making the South Pacific an 'ANZUS lake'.[11]

In essence, the allies' regional objective boiled down to one key aim. That was to cultivate the sentiment of belonging to a Western-aligned security community among the Islands so that no FIC would allow its territory to become a threat to its neighbours (including Australia and New Zealand).

The ANZUS playbook to secure that aim had three elements. The first was that Australia and New Zealand should take the regional lead for the alliance. Second, greater attention and resources should be devoted to the development needs of the region. Third, regional solidarity was highly desirable to maintain a united position on regional challenges and so minimise any tendency towards 'adventurism'.

The third element was particularly important, as regional solidarity was the basis for maintaining and strengthening the FICs' sentiment of belonging to a security community. It was recognised that alliance security would be seriously, perhaps fatally, compromised if the USSR secured even one satellite state in the region.

The 1976 alliance playbook was brought out again only a few years later. The December 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan drew an immediate response from Australia's Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, that Australia would take up more of the security concerns in the region to free the US to concentrate more on Afghanistan.

Fraser announced further aid to the Pacific Islands to strengthen the strategy of pre-empting any Soviet attempt to buy influence in the region. Again, the aid was provided to occupy the region's economic development 'space' and thereby obviate any need for Soviet assistance. In addition, Australia and the US expanded their diplomatic presence, and the three ANZUS states took the first steps towards limited defence cooperation with the FICs.

Significantly, there were indicators that ANZUS enjoyed some local support as a relevant contributor to regional security. The Soviet invasion heightened the USSR's negative image in the region, based on a general rejection of its anti-religious, Marxist ideology.

There were even some suggestions around this period that several FICs had expressed an interest in some form of association with ANZUS.[12] Whether kite-flying or serious, this sense of sharing a common purpose with the ANZUS allies demonstrated some appreciation within the region for the security benefits of the alliance.

Sliding door 4: Nuclear security for whom?

Hardly had a semblance of a shared security perspective between the ANZUS allies and the Western-aligned region emerged than it began to be challenged. The causes stemmed from a mix of global and regional factors. The global influences included changing resource and sovereignty claims being negotiated by the UN Third Conference on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) and a changing global geostrategic environment.

Regionally, the progress of decolonisation had diversified the range of political attitudes, making a security consensus more difficult. Moreover, actions by the ANZUS allies contributed both to seriously reduced alliance harmony and a fracturing of FICs' perspectives on the relevance of ANZUS for their security.

The region's nuclear allergy had been evident well before the French bomb tests at Mururoa.[13] Nevertheless, the wedge that the issue drove between the US and its antipodean allies intensified in the years following the creation of the PIF.

In 1972, left-of-centre governments came to power in Australia and New Zealand. For domestic reasons, as well as solidarity with their PIF partners, the Australian and New Zealand governments actively supported the Islands' protests at sea and in The Hague against the French nuclear tests.

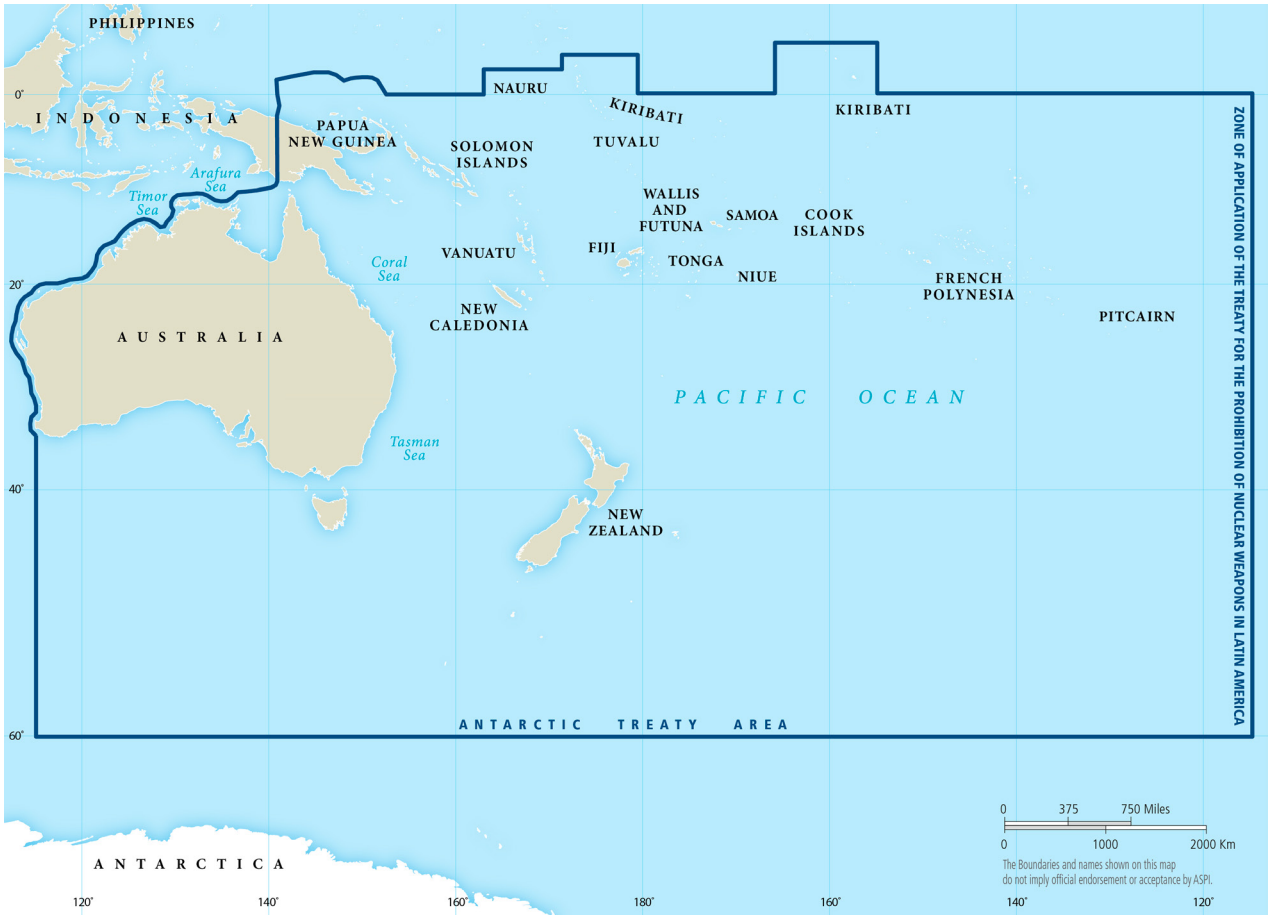
Their support for a regional nuclear-free zone created alliance tensions for a time, but the return of conservative governments more closely aligned with US policy in both countries short-circuited the proposal for nearly a decade. However, when the proposal was revived, it came back with an unstoppable intensity.

From 1980, Fiji and Vanuatu refused port access (although Fiji later reversed the policy), and agitation for a nuclear-free Pacific was popularly supported across the region as well as in the PIF. When Bob Hawke's Labor government revived the proposal for a South Pacific nuclear-free zone following his election in 1983, the dormant 1970s initiative gathered energy.

Critics were inclined to see the gesture as performance theatre for Labor's domestic audience. Whether it was genuine or an attempt to deflect complaints from the ALP left that Hawke wasn't doing enough domestically on nuclear power and uranium exports, the Hawke government lined up regional support for the proposal.

Especially mindful of the US, the government attempted to craft wording that wouldn't jeopardise American support for the proposal.[14] Within a remarkably short two years, the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty was opened for signature on symbolically relevant Hiroshima Day, 6 August 1985 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Area covered by the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty



The US refused to sign the protocols to associate itself with the SPNFZ Treaty, although, thanks to Australia's careful drafting, that didn't cause a serious rift within ANZUS between Australia and the US. That couldn't be said of New Zealand's support for a nuclear-free Pacific, which did shake the alliance to its foundations.

David Lange's Labour Government was elected in 1984 on a strong anti-nuclear platform and promptly announced a policy of barring all nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed ships from New Zealand's waters and ports.

The US sought to test New Zealand's resolve by sending the USS *Buchanan* to visit in February without confirming its nuclear status, as per US policy. The visit was declined. The executive policy was put into comprehensive legislation in 1987, making New Zealand land and seas nuclear free.[15] Washington deemed its ANZUS obligations to New Zealand suspended on the grounds that the legislation made alliance cooperation impossible.

The FICs' support for the SPNFZ and the suspension of New Zealand from alliance cooperation certainly dimmed regional views of ANZUS and its place in regional security. The sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*, Greenpeace's Mururoa nuclear protest vessel, while in Auckland Harbour in July 1985 by French state operatives won a great deal of regional sympathy for New Zealand.

The US didn't treat the provisions of the SPNFZ Treaty as a deal-breaker, unlike the New Zealand ban, in part because the FIC states took a more pragmatic line on the US and the nuclear warships issue. Fiji lifted its 1980 ban in 1983, accepting the SPNFZ Treaty loopholes for the US, and other FICs were clearly unwilling to force a confrontation on ship visits.

On balance, the PICs expected the SPNFZ Treaty to promote their environmental security as well as to insulate them from the consequences of geostrategic rivalry. The treaty didn't exclude them from the ANZUS umbrella, as they weren't under that umbrella.

Nuclear matters dominated this sliding-door moment in the 1980s, but they were scarcely the only ones of significance for the alliance at that time. Critically, the US was in dispute with the FICs over changes to the law of the sea through the UNCLOS III negotiations.

The Island countries expected the agreement on extended maritime economic zones to deliver them effective control over a major share of the Pacific's valuable tuna resource. A couple of US tuna boats were seized, provoking diplomatic confrontations between the US and the regional states.

In 1985, the Americans' intransigence led Kiribati to break ranks with its Pacific neighbours to accept a fishing deal with the USSR. President Ieremia Tabai maintained that the agreement was only an economic arrangement, yet most of his FIC counterparts tried to persuade him against the deal on security grounds.

Ultimately, Washington found a face-saving way out of the imbroglio through support to the Forum Fisheries Agency and three treaties to formally surrender islands claimed under the 1856 Guano Act. The treaties with Kiribati and Tuvalu contained security provisions requiring US approval if its wartime facilities in those countries were ever to be made available to a third party.

The USSR and offshore prospecting: the regional security community at work

In the mid-1980s, an episode involving the Committee for Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in South Pacific Offshore Areas (CCOP) and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) provided perhaps the clearest example of how the sense of belonging to a security community helped to rally the FICs' support for the ANZUS agenda.

In 1982, the USSR used its membership in the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to propose a five-year marine resources survey of the South Pacific seafloor. The CCOP/SOPAC operation was an ESCAP project to promote offshore mineral and petroleum prospecting. It was the regional offshoot of a larger ESCAP project in the South and East China seas.

Seeing the security threat in the proposal, the political leadership of the region, with the financial support of the three ANZUS allies, agreed to take the project away from ESCAP in 1984. It was reconstituted as a separate regional organisation, SOPAC, under the islands' control. The Soviet offer was then repudiated by SOPAC's Island membership.

To avoid heightening geostrategic sensitivities, the ANZUS partners declined to apply an alliance label to this effort to block the USSR's risky security-laden proposal, but the whole affair was entirely out of the 1976 ANZUS playbook.

Sliding door 5: Post–Cold War irrelevance?

In October 1990, a year after the destruction of the Berlin Wall, President George W Bush hosted a meeting with 11 leaders of the PIF in Honolulu. This first ever US-hosted regional summit proved more a last hurrah than the intended demonstration of continuing American interest.

As the Cold War sputtered out over the next few years, the Western powers made clear that much of the preceding two decades of attention and largesse had, indeed, been motivated by geostrategic concerns.

The US closed its mission in Honiara and its USAID office in Suva. The UK downgraded its regional engagement. Even Russia, as the successor state to the USSR, lost interest in the region. It almost immediately closed its hard-won embassy in Port Moresby, which the USSR had opened in January 1990.

The ANZUS consensus on the South Pacific's relevance to an alliance posture on broader geostrategic concerns lost focus with the end of the Cold War and the shunning of New Zealand over nuclear weapons. The US was content to leave security leadership primarily to its regional partner, Australia. And Canberra had some clear ideas on the meaning of the end of the Cold War for its approach to the region.

In a candid 1994 speech, Australia's Minister for Pacific Islands Affairs, Gordon Bilney, outlined explicitly how the new geostrategic environment would influence government policy.[16] He asserted that the independent PICs would have to take greater responsibility for their own welfare. Referencing the World Bank's 1993 *World development report*, Bilney embraced its claim of a 'Pacific paradox'.[17]

A decade of Australian and New Zealand efforts to find efficiencies in their relations with the FICs followed. Those efforts brought two key pillars of the 1976 ANZUS approach to the centre of a reform agenda.

The first aim was to ensure that aid met stricter criteria for success. The development 'spaces' that might have been exploited by the USSR to buy influence were projects that the Islands identified. In the post–Cold War order, donors' assessments of needs would figure more prominently, and, in keeping with the World Bank's concerns, that meant more emphasis on capacity building and good governance.

Looking ahead a few decades, the 1990s course correction on aid priorities contributed directly to the complaint that Australia failed for too long to provide the infrastructure assistance that the regional states wanted. Their disappointment opened a gaping door for influence, which China later exploited so successfully.

The second target was the region's institutional architecture. While presented as strengthening the regional organisations, the effect was for Australia and New Zealand to take a more hands-on role in those bodies. The organisations were also to be more streamlined, and the PIF was to have a stronger coordinating role. This approach was expressed in a series of programs to lend capacity to national bureaucracies at the state level and regionally through the PIF's Pacific Plan.[18]

The plan laid out an elaborate and comprehensive strategy for strengthening regional institutions and promoting regional integration. It has proved to be over-elaborate and without effective mechanisms for enmeshing with national structures.

Over time, those measures had the opposite effect by focusing attention on process rather than on content. The bureaucratisation of regional processes tended to separate the regional leadership from decision-making and outcomes.

Arguably, the current challenge to the ANZUS countries' desire to have a united and coherent region can be traced back to this attempt to 'rationalise' regional integration.

The third element of the 1976 ANZUS consensus on the appropriate approach to regional security lost strength even before the advent of the post–Cold War order. The isolation of New Zealand within ANZUS and the fracturing of the ANZUS Council were the main drivers.

The core elements of Australian and New Zealand leadership persisted, but from the Washington perspective the alliance was necessarily bilateralised. As Robert Ayson describes it, the current relationship is a chevron: Washington is at the centre apex, while Canberra and Wellington are at the ends of the two legs.[19]

As true as that might be for an American view of ANZUS, it wasn't entirely valid for the Australian and New Zealand view of regional leadership. The two continued to play a strong leadership role in the region but, due to New Zealand's relative sidelining within ANZUS, that didn't translate into a coordinated view on the broader geostrategic concerns of the alliance.

The diminished relevance of the region in ANZUS policy thinking didn't appear especially significant in the pragmatic political environment. The region still loomed large in the bilateral and multilateral relations of Australia and New Zealand with the region.

The development concerns of the independent PICs became less tethered to the security concerns of the alliance. Political instability in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea heightened donors' disquiet, but that instability wasn't perceived to create opportunities for risky mischief by bad external actors.

Reflections on the sliding-door moments

ANZUS, either as a treaty or as an alliance, has never been directly about the PICs or their region, but the treaty's formal provisions had some limited relevance to the Islands of the South Pacific, and that has reduced only somewhat over the past 70 years.

The alliance, on the other hand, has equivocated on the importance to the region's relevance. For the first two decades, security was largely a colonial responsibility requiring no special alliance attention.

The following two decades drew the region into the orbit of the broader geostrategic concerns of the alliance in large part due to the collapse of SEATO and a perception that the USSR might have some interest in the Islands.

The post–Cold War order returned the South Pacific to the alliance security backburner for next two decades. Towards the end of that third period, the region again became a topic of interest.

Before we assess the moments of decision of the past decade, it's worthwhile reflecting on any counterfactual lessons from the earlier sliding-door moments.

The earliest lessons were that the US was unwilling to take a regional approach to the security of the region despite Australia and New Zealand's desire for a broader inclusive system. That left out Britain and France—two important potential contributors. Significantly, the provision in Article VIII of the treaty authorising the development of wider consultative relationships has never been activated.

In the late 1940s, the reinforcement of colonial privilege seemed appropriate to metropolitan powers anxious to recover their control over their colonies. Yet the ANZAC Pact powers proved perspicacious in wanting to link their vision of Pacific security to the social and political stability of the entire region.

The contemporary cleavages separating FIC security perspectives from extra-regional interests can be traced back directly to exclusionary and colonialist decisions made in 1947 and formalised in the 1951 treaty.

Had the 1944 ANZAC Pact been more forward-looking and an Island-inclusive path been chosen, a closer and more direct linkage could have evolved between the military security of ANZUS and the contemporary human security emphasis of the PIF Island states in the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security.[20]

When the USSR seemingly presented a geostrategic threat in the 1970s, the ANZUS allies reacted with surprised alarm. Neither the treaty nor the alliance structure provided for a regionally appropriate response. In the event, the allies agreed on some general guidelines for preventing the emergence of a possible Soviet challenge.

Simply retaining the *status quo* was a win for ANZUS, as the USSR wasn't present. The newly independent South Pacific states were generally conservative, strongly Christian and not traumatised by difficult transitions to self-government. Marxism wasn't an attractive ideology among the leadership or the people of the region. The case for a security community and against foreign adventurism was easy to make and generally accepted.

The allies' regional Cold War playbook managed to meet their objective of retaining the region's Western alignment while excluding the USSR, but there were precedents and downstream repercussions.

The overt use of aid to support a strategic objective became a meme that more lately has come to haunt bids for contemporary assistance relationships. Could any significant power give any aid that wasn't strategically motivated?

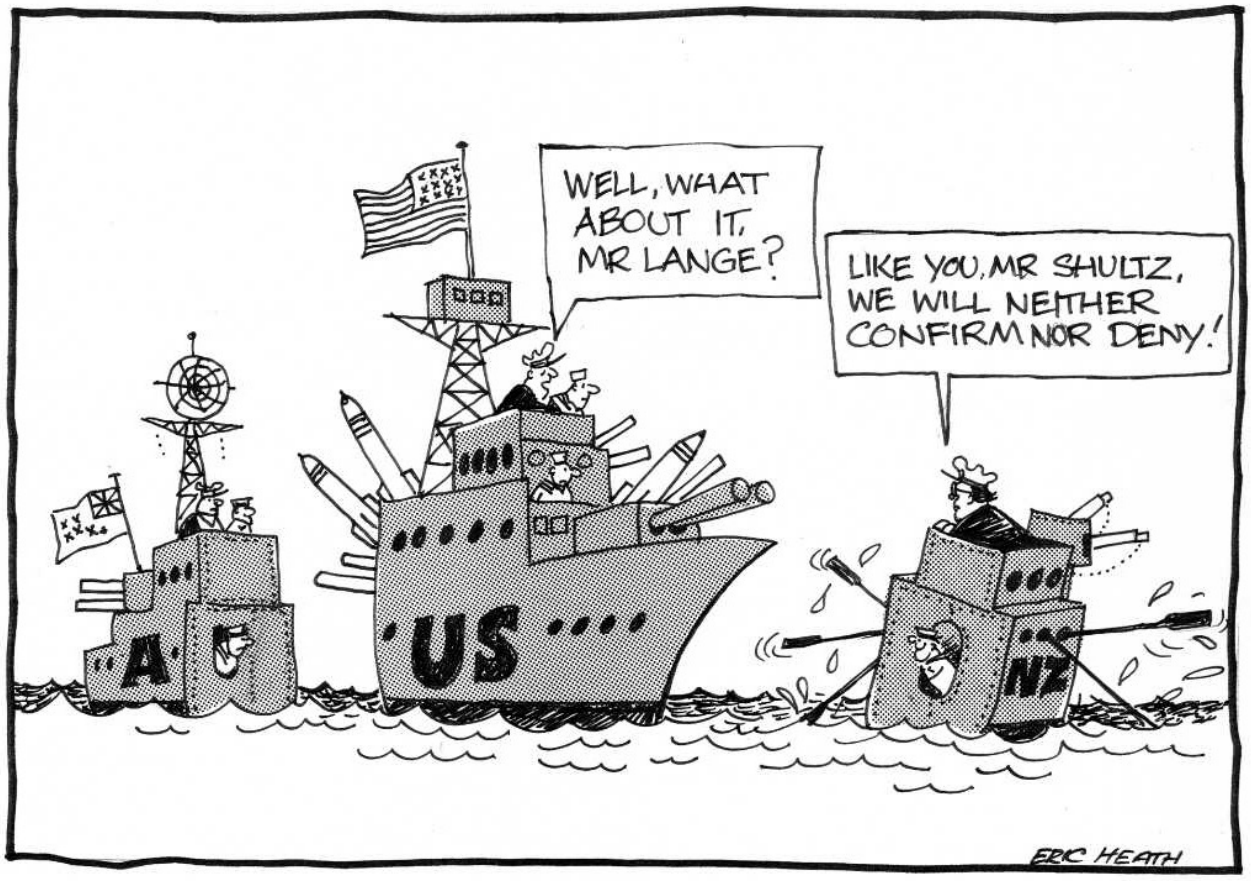
The expectation that regionalism would serve to protect a Western-aligned South Pacific overlooked two important points. Earlier decisions had bifurcated the region between the SPC system and the PIF system of agencies. The degree of regional unity might have been valid when PIF membership was limited, but its membership was programmed to expand.

Even Australia's and New Zealand's roles as regional hegemons within the PIF were limited by the fractures within the regional system. The PIF couldn't respond effectively to the regional security interests of the US or those of non-ANZUS security partners Britain and France. That became even more an issue when the US wanted to extend alliance objectives to include the free movement of ships and access to regional ports.

Without an identified threat, the ANZUS alliance *qua* alliance lost discernible interest in the Pacific Island region from the end of the Cold War through the first decade of the 21st century.

The tensions within the alliance over American nuclear defence policy not only inhibited a general sense of common purpose, but also weakened the alliance as a collective actor in the region (Figure 6).

Figure 6: New Zealand takes an independent line on nuclear ships



Source: Eric Heath: 'Well, what about it, Mr Lange?'. *The Dominion*, 28 August 1985. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, online.

Nevertheless, the ANZUS parties, bilaterally and individually, wanted to maintain good relations with the PIF countries regardless of occasional tensions between alliance members and regional states.

Some strains were significant, especially the political and social instabilities in Papua New Guinea, the Solomons and Fiji. The putative 'global war on terror' raised some shared tripartite concerns about state weakness. The prospect of failed states in the region being exploited by terrorists through purchased passports, flags of convenience and money laundering also raised concerns. Additionally, the ANZUS states individually strengthened regional security capacity to protect resources and respond to natural and man-made disasters.

Although information was shared and some efforts were coordinated, tripartite collective policy planning was largely absent. Thus, through to the first decade of the 21st century, pragmaticism and a lack of perceived need for an ANZUS-coordinated regional security approach raised a serious question. Had the door finally slammed shut on the relevance of the ANZUS alliance for regional security?

A 70th anniversary sliding-door moment: a frenemy comes knocking, and ANZUS and others respond

Rapidly rising Chinese influence in the Pacific Island region over the past decade has elevated the People's Republic of China (PRC) to a level of perceived threat to alliance interests not seen since the height of the Cold War.

However, will we see a rerun of the ANZUS playbook or even the creation of a new ANZUS-based response? The PRC's economic, military and political powers have global reach. Attempts to construct countervailing regional responses have consequently redefined 'the region' as the Indo-Pacific arena, to the annoyance of the PIF's Island members, who fear their interests will be marginalised.

Considering the size of the perceived threat, do the ANZUS members have the will to incorporate a narrower Pacific Island regional security plan within their contributions to Indo-Pacific arrangements? And what would it take to win FIC support for any such ANZUS approach to regional security?

The ANZUS members clearly believe individually that a response is needed to counterbalance China's growing regional influence. All three states, and their allies, have made significant policy adjustments in recent years to review and enhance their own burden-sharing responsibilities to support a more effective security engagement with the Forum Island states and the regional system.[21]

United States: Pacific Pledge

The Biden administration has continued the Trump administration's increasing engagement with the Pacific Islands.[22]

The US has prioritised military and non-traditional security issues in the Pacific, including climate change, environmental security and transnational crime.

The Small and Less Populous Island Economies (SALPIE) initiative has brought 29 US Government departments and agencies together to prioritise the economic challenges and recovery from Covid-19.

SALPIE includes the Pacific Islands. It's focused on mitigating the effects of climate change; sustainable development; environmental protection and conservation; and countering predatory investment and trade practices.

The US Congress is engaging with the Pacific through three main pieces of legislation: the BLUE Pacific Act, the Honoring OCEANIA Act, and the Strategic Competition Act.

The *BLUE Pacific Act* recognises US security interests in respecting the sovereignty of the PICs and enhancing the economic prosperity of the region through trade and development and supporting good governance.[23]

It authorises US$149 million per year until 2026 for initiatives covering diplomatic presence; transnational crime; trade development and capacity; climate and health security; media freedom; gender equality; and civil society engagement and development.

The *Honoring OCEANIA Act* highlights the importance of health; environmental protection; disaster resilience and preparedness; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; maritime security; and economic development.[24] The Act is designed to strengthen multilateral engagement with the PICs, as well as Australia, New Zealand, France, Japan, the UK and South Korea as major contributors to regional security and resiliency.

The *Strategic Competition Act* focuses on countering Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific in a variety of issue areas, including journalism, technology partnerships, military matters and diplomatic engagement.[25] The legislation has received bipartisan support. It authorises the US to counter Chinese growth and pursuit of 'exclusive control of critical land routes, sea lanes, and air space in the Indo-Pacific' (section 2.19) through diplomatic alliances and coalitions, military modernisation and market-based economic investment.

The Act frames US engagement in the Pacific within its priorities of countering China's malign activity and behaviour in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

The Biden administration has prioritised enhancing the US's diplomatic presence in the region, increasing and deepening bilateral and regional cooperation, especially on media and press freedom, and gender and civil society equality and equity. In August 2021, President Biden became the first US President to address the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting.

The Pentagon has considered a proposal for a permanent naval taskforce to counter China in the Pacific, signalling a fiscal shift from the Middle East to China and the Indo-Pacific.[26] The Pacific taskforce would also engage NATO and regional allies, including the UK, France, Australia and Japan.

Australia: Pacific Step-up

Australia's Pacific Step-up was announced in 2016 at the PIF. Australia remains the largest development assistance partner of the Pacific, committing $1.44 billion for 2020–21.[27]

The *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* recognised the need to secure our nearer region and noted also the importance of education, economic cooperation and people-to-people links.[28]

The *2016 Defence White Paper* identified the South Pacific as critical strategic geography and noted that variable economic growth, crime, governance and climate change are major challenges to the region's progress.

Australia engages with the US, New Zealand, Japan and India in the Pacific, recently integrating the Step-up with India's Indo-Pacific Act East Policy.

Canberra cooperates with multilateral institutions in the region, including the PIF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

In 2019, the Australian Pacific Security College was established at the Australian National University to support the implementation of the PIF's Boe Declaration.

Climate change and rising sea levels threaten the PICs. Australia supports the PICs' delimitation of their maritime baselines through the Pacific Islands Regional Maritime Boundaries Project.[29]

Australia has integrated climate-change action strategies into its policies in the Pacific, pledging $500 million over five years to assist Pacific nations to invest in renewable energy, climate-change adaptation and disaster resilience.[30]

The Pacific Fusion Centre, funded by Australia, will be located this year in Vanuatu. It's been established to enhance regional capacity on common security priorities, such as climate change, IUU fishing, drug smuggling, human trafficking and disinformation.[31] It will support analytical capacity and security coordination in the region.

The Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific provides grants and loan financing to PICs for energy, water, transport, telecommunications and other infrastructure. It has approved seven projects. Two are in Papua New Guinea, two in Fiji, and one in each of Solomon Islands, Palau and Timor-Leste.

Australia is managing the redevelopment of Papua New Guinea's Lombrum naval base on Manus Island.

The centrepiece of the Defence Cooperation Program is the Pacific Maritime Security Program to replace Pacific-class patrol boats given to 12 FICs with Guardian-class patrol boats (Figure 7).[32] The program provides enhanced aerial surveillance and support to assist FICs in protecting their national sovereignty and resources.

In October 2021 the Australian government underwrote Telstra's purchase of Digicel Pacific, the region's largest telco. The US$1.33 billion deal eclipses Australia's annual aid program to the Pacific.

Figure 7: RSIPV *Taro* at Austal shipyards in Henderson, Western Australia

Source: Calistemon, Wikimedia, 20 March 2021, online.

New Zealand: Pacific Reset

In 2018, New Zealand recognised the Pacific's increasing relationships with 'non-traditional' partners. The Pacific Reset was aimed at ensuring that New Zealand's engagement made a positive impact in the Pacific in line with the Island countries' values.[33]

In the same year, Foreign Minister Winston Peters announced an enhanced 'aid programme, expanded diplomatic representation, significant defence policy shifts, and continued labour mobility programmes'.[34]

With one in five New Zealanders being of Māori or Pasifika heritage, New Zealand has a strong cultural connection to the Pacific. Its growing identity with the Pacific has underpinned its soft-power engagement with the region.[35]

The Pacific Reset provides a cross-government framework to engage with the region.

An additional NZ$170 million has been added to New Zealand's official development assistance (ODA) in its first year, of which 60% goes to the Pacific. An additional NZ$714 million over four years was provided for diplomatic and development engagement.

The Pacific Enabling Fund injected NZ$10 million into cultural and sport diplomacy, military cooperation and enhancing person-to-person ties throughout the Pacific.[36]

In 2019–20, New Zealand spent NZ$447 million on ODA in the Pacific, as well as:

- funding a NZ$10 million program of cybersecurity capacity building for PICs
- giving NZ$15 million to the Green Climate Fund and initiating the Access to Finance program, with the aim of improving PICs' ability to access and use finance for their climate-change responses
- supplying NZ$10 million for immediate health system preparedness
- giving $40 million for Pacific governments to respond to broader economic, health and social implications.

The Pacific Reset has led to the establishment of 10 new diplomatic posts throughout the Pacific. New Zealand established four new positions in Tokyo, Beijing, Brussels and New York to engage with major powers to coordinate development policy and partnerships for the Pacific region.[37]

New Zealand has cooperated with the US, Australia and Japan to electrify Papua New Guinea. The aim is to increase the proportion of citizens connected to the grid from 13% to 70% by 2030.

New Zealand contributes to air and maritime surveillance throughout the Pacific as part of the Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group and through the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercises (Figure 8).[38]

Figure 8: HMNZS *Manawanui*

Source: Wikimedia, online.

Japan: Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy at the 2016 Tokyo International Conference on African Development.

It prioritised Japan's responsibility to ensure that the region 'values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous'.[39]

Japan engages the Pacific region through the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM), which was established in 1997.

Following the PALM meeting after the announcement of the FOIP Strategy, Japan and the PICs agreed to cooperate on capacity building in maritime security, including maritime law enforcement, maritime safety equipment and training to combat IUU fishing.[40]

The Japan Coast Guard Mobile Cooperation Team has assisted PICs to develop maritime law enforcement capacity and expertise throughout the region.

Tokyo has invested ¥55 billion (US$460 million) into human resource development and people-to-people exchanges in the Pacific.

Through the Japan International Cooperation Agency and World Customs Organization, Japan sends experts to support public financial management, including budget planning, budget execution and debt management.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen Japan provide ¥4 billion for medical equipment and ¥580 million for technical support and medical supplies.

It has provided an additional ¥7 billion in development assistance to the Pacific.[41]

Japan has contributed to medical capacity, including training, capacity building and equipment for Fiji.

Japan works with multilateral institutions and regional powers, including Australia, New Zealand and the US, to ensure access to Covid-19 vaccines throughout the Pacific.[42]

United Kingdom: Pacific Uplift

The UK's Pacific Uplift strategy centres on the commitment to the peace and security of the world, prioritising global stability, multilateralism and the rule of law.[43]

London has concluded free trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand and acceded to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

In 2018, the UK announced the establishment of a diplomatic post in Samoa and the reopening of its posts in Tonga and Vanuatu, which were closed in 2006.[44]

In Tonga and Vanuatu, UK and New Zealand diplomats will co-locate in the UK High Commission. Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said that will mean they can 'share in each other's expertise and work together to tackle vital challenges such as climate change'.[45]

The opening of the diplomatic posts coincides with increased UK engagement with Australia and New Zealand to complement their engagement in the Pacific.

Between 2011 and 2017, the UK provided A$3.5 million in aid to the Pacific, but the economic effects of Covid-19 have yet to be factored into its aid.[46]

The announcement of the AUKUS trilateral security partnership will see the UK deepen ties with the US and Australia, collaborating on Australian nuclear-powered submarines and sharing technology, from cybersecurity to artificial intelligence.

However, that may affect relations with New Zealand, which has announced that Australian nuclear-powered submarines will be banned from New Zealand waters.[47]

A community of security interests

Australia's Step-up, New Zealand's Pacific Reset and the US Pacific Pledge recognise the need to assert a community of security interests with the region.[48] The ANZUS powers aren't alone in this.

The UK has, as noted above, promoted its Pacific Uplift, and France has announced a new Indo-Pacific strategy with an upgraded emphasis on the Pacific Island region.[49] Japan is using its leadership of the FOIP project to promote policies more inclusive of Island countries' concerns and needs.[50]

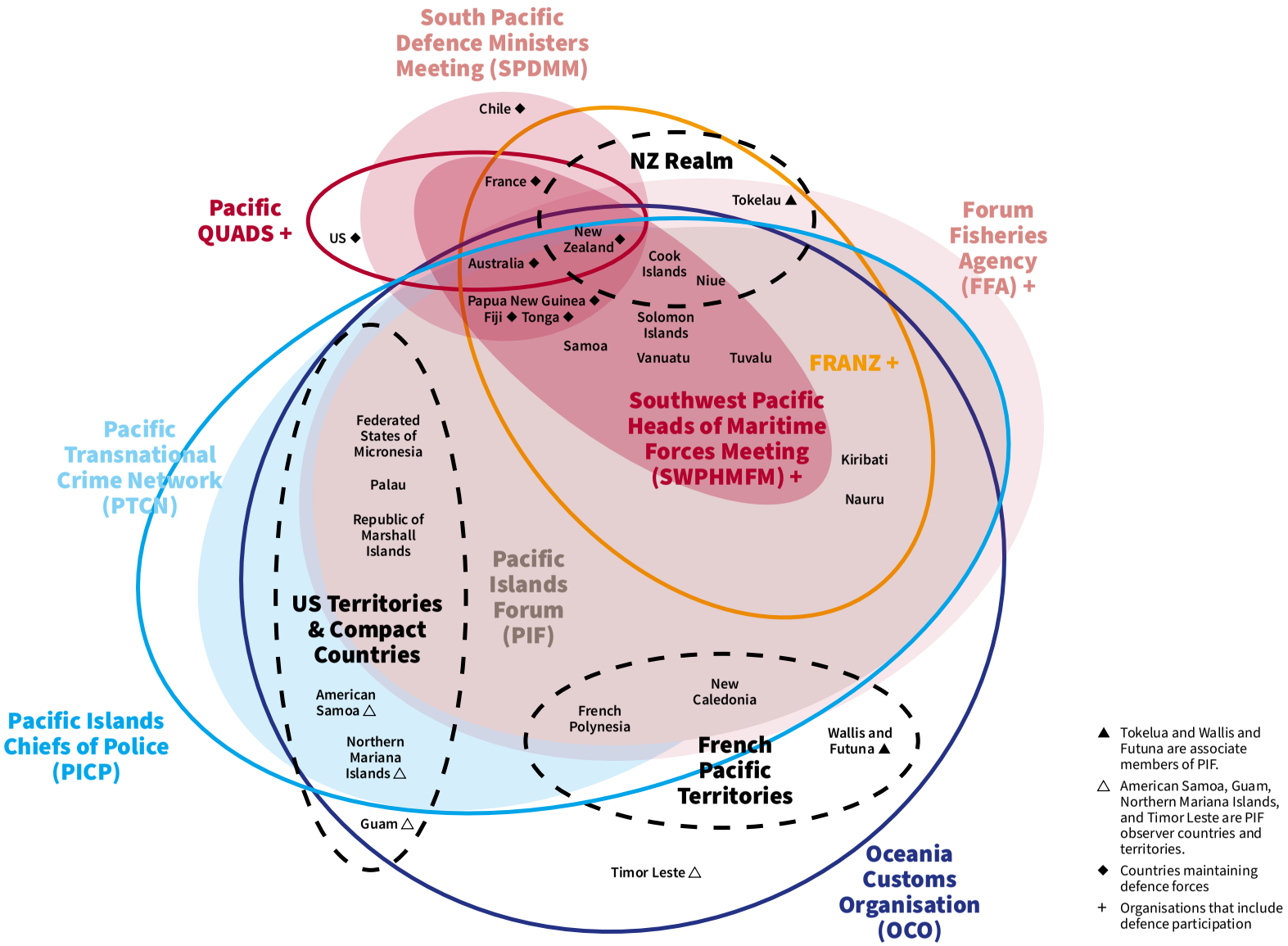
The content and language of these policy initiatives have a great deal in common, including their use of terms such as 'engagement', 'partnership', 'diplomatic presence' and 'regional cooperation'. They make commitments to increased financial assistance, support for regional priorities such as climate change, the blue economy and resource protection.

Elements of these initiatives unmistakably resemble those from the ANZUS Cold War playbook. For the three ANZUS states, and perhaps most notably the US, their initiatives are trying to recover the regional momentum they lost when they relaxed their strategic focus at the end of the Cold War.[51]

However, there's little to indicate that the current initiatives have been coordinated as a specifically ANZUS approach. Indeed, the advent of AUKUS and the Quad appears to signal concerns that a much higher level of security partnership is needed to meet the rising influence of China across the Indo-Pacific and that ANZUS might not play a central role.

Even if there's been some tripartite coordination on the alliance partners' individual initiatives, it seems unlikely that it would bear the ANZUS label. A diagram in New Zealand's 2019 *Advancing Pacific partnerships* report failed to identify either ANZUS or ANZAC as part of its security architecture (Figure 9).[52]

Figure 9: New Zealand's view of its security architecture



Source: *Advancing Pacific partnerships 2019*, New Zealand Government, 2019, online.

Despite a rapprochement between the US and New Zealand on security relations, Wellington prefers to describe security officials' meetings among the three nations as *trilateral* rather than as ANZUS consultations. (see box)

Trilateral Security Dialogue

Since 2018, senior officials from the three ANZUS partners have met at the Australia – New Zealand – United States Pacific Security Cooperation Dialogue. The dialogue brings together civilian and military representatives from the three governments to discuss security issues and identify areas to strengthen cooperation with Pacific Island countries and regional bodies on common regional challenges.

The dialogue complements bilateral discussions each participating country has with Island countries. Delegations included officials from the three governments responsible for foreign affairs, defence, law enforcement, coastguards, homeland security, development and trade.

The inaugural dialogue considered issues such as strengthening port security, increasing maritime domain awareness and combating transnational organised crime. The May 2021 round of the dialogue discussed climate change, the renewing of the compacts of free association (with FSM, the Marshall Islands and Palau), economic support for seasonal workers, vaccine support and disinformation and vaccine hesitancy.

Given a broad Western consensus on the need to secure a favourable security alignment across the region and general support for the approach to achieve that, does it matter that there isn't a specific ANZUS-designed policy?

On the plus side, the ANZUS alliance has presided over a period with few threats to regional security, and the region has benefited from fairly close and supportive relationships with the three allied powers. The historical relations between the ANZUS parties and the PICs have contributed to stability and development within the region.

Difficulties between an ANZUS partner and regional states have generally found a supportive alliance member able and willing to provide good-faith intercession to take the heat out of what would otherwise be acrimonious, asymmetrical controversies.

Importantly for the people of the region, the ANZUS states have provided safe, receptive destinations for the region's diaspora, which contributes directly back into the region through remittances, educational opportunities for family members and entrepreneurial growth.

The positives aren't without qualifications, of course, but they do stand out by contrast with most other developing regions.

The negatives haven't been fully tested but might not be inconsequential in the current geopolitical climate. During the Cold War, the regional states were inclined to accept an ANZUS view that the USSR was a legitimate security concern. Coherent and consistent messaging by the ANZUS powers, helped by a virtual absence of any local counter-narrative, served to validate the Islands' concerns about the USSR. The underlying commitment to a Western-aligned regional security community was maintained for two decades. Those circumstances don't apply in exactly the same way today.

China enjoyed a generation of non-threatening presence in the region before extra-regional security perceptions of its place in the Pacific Islands changed. However, the dramatic expansion of PRC sea power from 2010 and the rise to power of Xi Jinping, who has pursued nationalist policies internationally, have fostered a rapid extra-regional reappraisal of Chinese regional ambitions.

The opportunities for cooperative, mutually supportive development activities that Western donors thought possible in previous years have been replaced by suspicions of malign Chinese intentions to undermine the region's traditional friends and shared security interests.[53]

Having long accepted China as a legitimate actor in the region, the FICs have been unwilling to completely reverse their view of the PRC so quickly. Criticisms of 'roads to nowhere', overpriced buildings ill-suited to tropical conditions and the risk of 'debt diplomacy' have had only mixed success in changing regional opinion.

The debt diplomacy meme has dented Chinese soft power, particularly at the village level, where traditional land tenure systems and subsistence agriculture loom large. The meme has had less success among Island political and bureaucratic elites, who are more inclined to focus on Chinese aid and the PRC's economic success. The military threat from China hasn't loomed large at either level.

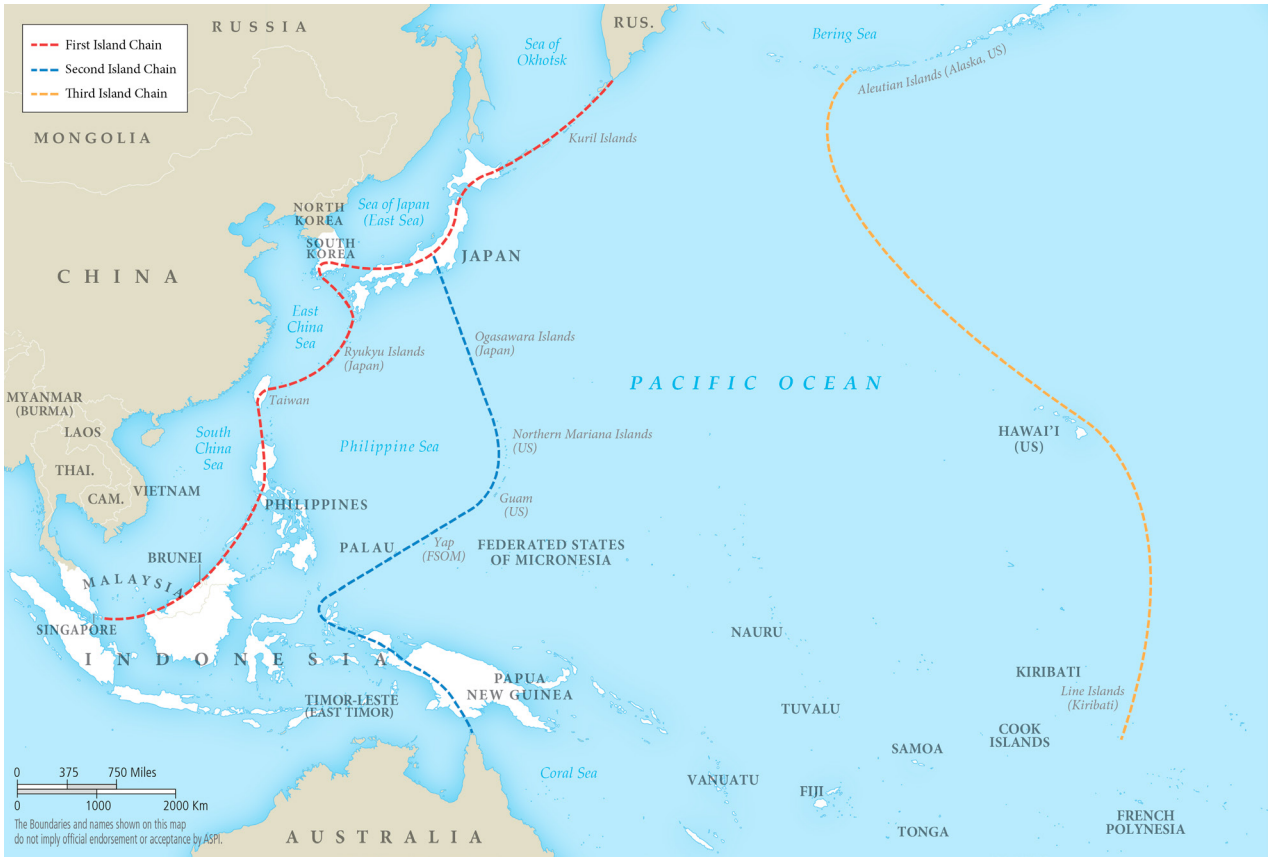
There's an agreed regional perception of threat from China's growing international assertiveness, but the nature of the threat isn't seen in the same way by the region's traditional friends. The incoming PIF Secretary-General, Henry Puna, expressed his concern in terms of the dangers of a 'complex geo-political environment'.[54]

ANZUS and the Pacific island chains

The identification of an island-chain strategy in the Western Pacific began with the US at war in Korea as part of the more general US containment policy aimed at the USSR and its Chinese ally. The first island chain centred on Taiwan and reached northward to the Kuriles and south to Indonesia. A second chain anchored on Guam stretched from Japan through the Marianas and the Caroline Islands (now the FSM) to Palau.

In recent decades, Chinese naval analysts have adopted the language and mirrored the security thinking behind the island-chains strategic concept (Figure 10).[55]

Figure 10: Island chains of defence in the Pacific Ocean, as seen by Chinese strategists



Source: Based on Andres S Erickson, Joel Wuthnow, 'Barriers, springboards and benchmarks', *China Quarterly*, 2016.

The first island chain was a key concern for SEATO and is now a main matter of interest for the Quad and is likely to be one for AUKUS.

The second island chain tended to be the strategic preserve of the US, since everything southward of the Japanese islands was American. Even after the FSM and Palau achieved independence, both maintained security ties to the US.

In the new complex geopolitical environment, the US has moved to strengthen its defence presence in Guam and Palau. Australia has also taken an elevated interest in the Micronesian entities. Japan is cooperating more actively in this area as well.

Two developments may inhibit the relevance of ANZUS in the second island chain. First, the Quad, AUKUS, or both, may assert pre-eminence, obviating a need for an active ANZUS role. Second, if the Micronesian states break away from the PIF, their politics will drift more towards a US–Japan security orbit.

The putative strategic value of the third island chain is indistinct from either the US or the Chinese perspective. Hawaii is the core link, but the chain from the Aleutians to American Samoa is US territory. Southward from Samoa through Fiji to New Caledonia, there are no ANZUS territories.

'ANZUS Plus' could help to shore up the third island chain as a security asset, but that underscores the current ANZUS dilemma. How much needs to be done to exclude an injurious Chinese influence without providing an incentive to Beijing to pursue countermeasures?

Although the threat that the FICs perceive is one of being caught up as collateral damage by the strategic competition, there are other views. Former PIF Secretary-General Dame Meg Taylor was inclined to argue that there could be a silver lining to the strategic jockeying.[56] She said that the attention that the rivalry brought offered 'greater options for financing and development … through the increased competition in our region'. Her comments echoed the old Cold War sentiment that being able to bargain for strategic access could be lucrative for meeting regional development aspirations.

Dame Meg was also mindful that playing China could be very damaging to the FICs and their region. She warned that there would always be a price to be paid by the small states participating in an aid auction for access. 'Are we going to owe them places for military bases? Are we going to owe them places for their influence and control of the Pacific Ocean?'[57]

The problem today is that the consequences are far more perilous than at the end of the Cold War. Tweaking the kiwi's beak, twisting the kangaroo's tail or tugging at the eagle's tailfeathers then posed few risks, since there was no USSR to exploit the gamble, but all the players, including China, are very much at the table today.

These views suggest two solid reasons as to why the FICs might want the ANZUS alliance to develop a coherent region-friendly security posture in the present circumstances.

The first comes back to the FICs' resistance to being incorporated in the broader security environment of the Indo-Pacific. This is a modern reassertion of Ratu Mara's complaint two generations earlier about the way outsiders attempted to define the region, its people and their interests.

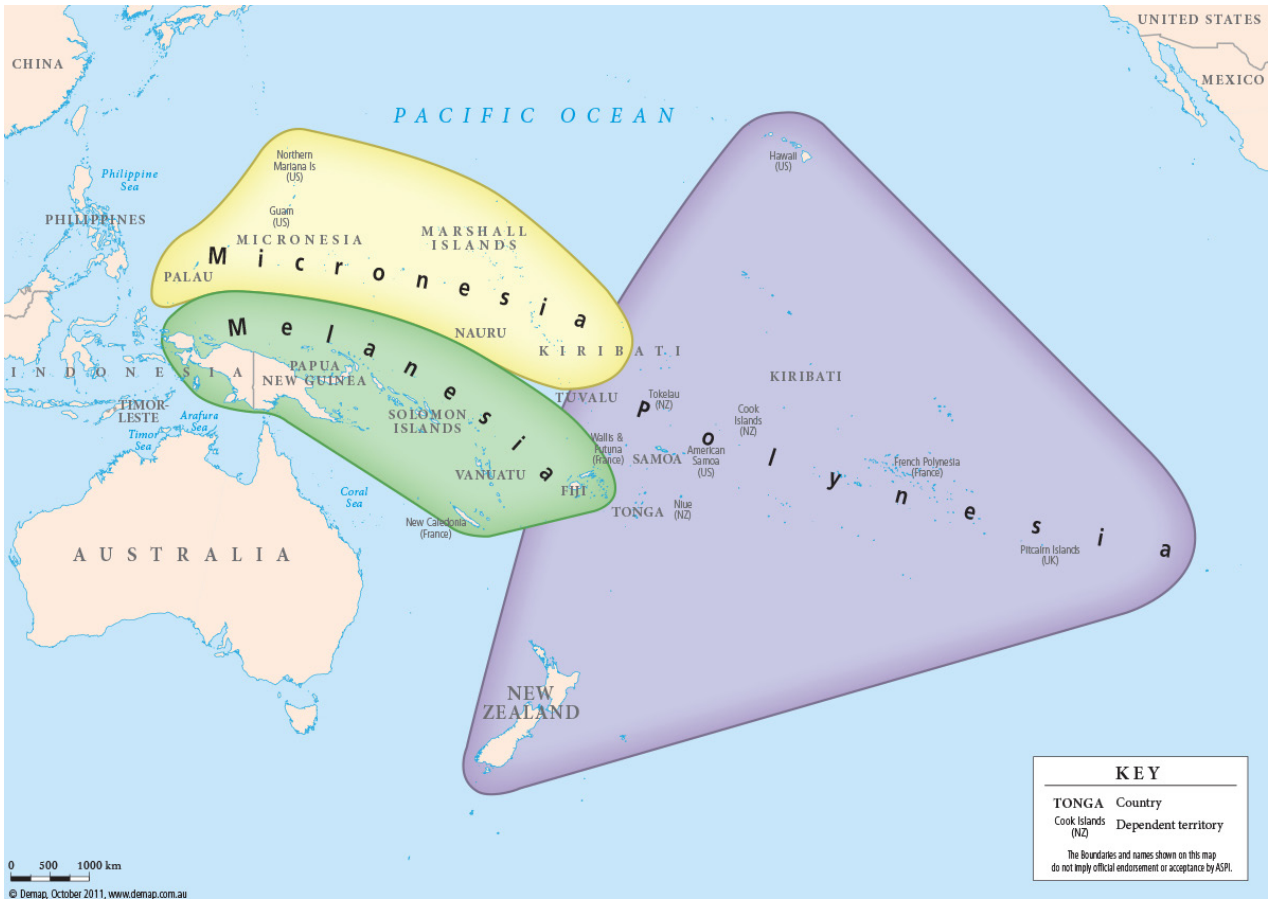
As the complex relationships of the Indo-Pacific develop and evolve into something that will become a stable security system, the FICs could find it useful to have a regional security advocate willing to consult them and to embrace their agenda.

The ANZUS allies have the capacity to be that advocate, based on their long and multilayered engagement with the region and its security needs. The intensity and broader vistas of the defence arrangements of AUKUS, the Quad and the FOIP project have underscored the need for some sympathetic voice to speak on behalf of the region and its security priorities.

The three ANZUS partners are deeply embedded, individually and collectively, in the architecture of the Pacific Island region. They have an obligation to ensure that the best interests of the region aren't lost in the shuffle of shifting geostrategic realignments.

The second reason follows on from the first. Dame Meg issued a warning to the region on its responsibility to protect its core regional interests amid the complex geopolitical environment swirling around it. She said, 'if we divide into our sub-regions and then get played off by geo-strategic interests, our own interests as a collective will be undermined' (Figure 11).[58]

Figure 11: Ethnographic map of the Pacific Islands



Source: Anthony Bergin, Richard Herr, *Our near abroad: Australia and Pacific islands regionalism*, ASPI, Canberra, 30 November 2011, online.

Not only would an acrimonious fracturing of the PIF seriously weaken the region's united political voice, but it could also undermine sentiment in favour of being members of a regional security community, as ANZUS feared in 1976. A PRC breach of the solidarity of the third island chain today would have even more repercussions for ANZUS than a new USSR satellite state might have had in the Cold War era, given the proportionally greater power of China now.

Recognition of the value of a collective voice thus cuts both ways. Each of the three ANZUS allies has a special area of influence with the region: Australia in Melanesia, New Zealand in Polynesia and the US in Micronesia. While they can't preserve the unity of the PIF against its members' will (Palau has withdrawn from the forum, and other Micronesian states might follow it), they should do nothing to exacerbate the current tensions.

If the PIF does fracture, there's a risk that each ANZUS partner might lose focus on sharing a regional burden collectively. On the other side, the collapse of the PIF's authoritative regional voice would make it difficult for the allies to support a coherent regional security perspective in broader Indo-Pacific forums.

Stepping forward

There are several paths forward from the current sliding-door moment. The path chosen will depend in large part on whether the ANZUS allies and the Island countries accept that there's a mutually beneficial intersection of their security interests.

The option of returning to the 'agreeable club' of the 1950s and 1960s might be possible if AUKUS, the Quad or some more formalised FOIP arrangement emerges to play the role that SEATO performed in pushing ANZUS into the background.

The pragmatic, somewhat individualised approach of the two decades or so following the end of the Cold War might appear to be a more plausible prospect for ANZUS, given the fractures within the alliance that characterised those years.

However, China's heightened pursuit of regional influence has prompted the ANZUS partners to refurbish the language and tone of the Cold War decades while undertaking initiatives to shore up the security-community sentiments that characterised those years.

ANZUS and the FICs all recognise that the geostrategic challenges today aren't the same as in the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, they aren't drawing the same lessons of common interests found in the earlier period of strategic rivalry.

On balance, we find that, if some significant issues can be negotiated effectively, an updated regional security role for ANZUS would meet important needs for both the alliance and the region.

We suggest nine measures to advance those objectives and support ANZUS to better provide the next generation of security for the Pacific Island region. Because those measures are interrelated, they're not listed here in priority order.

Recommendation 1: Restore the ANZUS Council as an effective policy organ for the alliance.

Restoring full and effective participation in the ANZUS Council as the policy cornerstone of the alliance is necessary to maximise the synergy of the alliance.

The individual components of the alliance have strengths in the region but, also, individually they have sent mixed signals about regional security. It's difficult to present the alliance as a coherent security association when one member rejects the name or when two are reluctant to meet with the third at the ministerial level.

Ideally, this would be the first step towards refurbishing the alliance as a credible brand and allowing corrosive issues to be addressed in-house. At a practical level, it would appear essential to addressing questions of interoperability within the alliance.[59]

The nuclear issue has been the sticking point for more than 30 years. This is a matter of importance to the FICs as well as to New Zealand. Removing it as a key irritant in the alliance could make ANZUS more 'region friendly' as a sympathetic interlocutor for the region.

The FICs have found ways to accommodate US ship visits, and New Zealand even relaxed enough to allow one US warship visit in 2016.

This matter has become even more urgent in the light of the decision by Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines. Some pragmatic give-and-take within the alliance along the lines taken by the FICs could be matched by an American gesture to the region.

The US could accept the SPNFZ Treaty protocols as President Barack Obama requested and as the FICs continue to want.[60]

Making fuller use of the provisions of the ANZUS Treaty within a restored ministerial council could help to modernise the alliance and address some of the missed opportunities of its early days.

Recommendation 2: Make fuller use of the ANZUS Treaty's Article VIII provisions to better integrate supportive extra-regional powers into an 'ANZUS Plus'.

Article VIII of the treaty empowers the ANZUS Council to maintain a 'consultative relationship' with relevant states and organisations.

The inclusion of Britain, France and Japan would bring all the Indo-Pacific states with historical and continuing security interests in the region into the ANZUS policy tent.

The circumstances of the creation of AUKUS may make this both more difficult and more desirable. The key to promoting a shared sense of belonging to a regional security community hangs on agreed interests and consistent messaging. 'ANZUS Plus' would help to achieve that.

This could provide a useful bridge linking the regional platform of the South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting (which will now include Japan) through ANZUS to the FOIP project.[61]

Recommendation 3: Calling out Chinese actions that threaten the international rules-based order on which the region's security depends must be pursued actively but sensitively.

Arguably, the ANZUS partners focused aid on capacity-building and governance at the expense of infrastructure investment in the two decades following the end of the Cold War, creating the opening that China is currently exploiting. Stepping up, resetting and pledging for infrastructure aid are now well in the ANZUS frame.

Nevertheless, maintaining the region's support for a rules-based international order remains a security priority for ANZUS. Standing up to Chinese misuse of influence in the region is important for ANZUS because it's important to the regional states in maintaining the regional security community in which they have significant agency.

Calling out China's abuse of its influence has proved problematic, given the FICs' perception that such criticism will draw them into geopolitical rivalry designed to force a binary choice between their traditional friends and China.

Moreover, China's significant diplomatic presence and substantial trade and aid relationships with most Forum Island states have been powerful assets for defying Western criticism directly and for counter-messaging in defence of Chinese priorities.

Increasing evidence of China's coercive behaviour and 'wolf-warrior' diplomacy is having an impact on Island leaders and publics, nonetheless. This has opened more space to have frank conversations about China's risky activities in the region.

Messaging ANZUS's legitimate security concerns in ways that appear less judgemental of FIC relations with China but underscore the positives of shared community values appears to be winning more acceptance in the region.[62]

One of the strengths that ANZUS has taken into the present 'moment' is that the alliance has never been identified as a threat to regional security aims. Often, it has enjoyed a positive, albeit unobtrusive, image.

The following two recommendations could help to moderate the overstated divide between the non-traditional security favoured by the FICs and the legitimate geostrategic concerns of the ANZUS states.

Recommendation 4: Mobilise the private sector and civil society to protect the region's values of a free economy and an open society.

Much of the growth in Chinese influence in the region has come at the expense of local private-sector opportunities and against the values promoted by civil society across the region. The private sector and civil society groups have a significant role to play as local voices against economic coercion and the intergenerational burdens of unaffordable international debt.

Support for free and intrepid media is vital to ensure that criticism of Chinese counter-messaging and inappropriate elite influence is accepted as a local issue. If the messaging of security concerns is left largely to the ANZUS allies, that grants an unwarranted equivalency to the PRC's outlook on regional security.

Recommendation 5: Develop an inventory of potential strategic infrastructure 'red lines' to neutralise those issues before they become contentious.

Recently, Chinese investments or aid in the region for communication infrastructure such as undersea cables, telephone and internet services and finance facilities have provoked reactions that have contributed substantially to the PICs' concerns about geopolitical rivalry.

Significantly, the Island states didn't identify the questionable Chinese investments as intrinsically menacing to ANZUS security interests. Had British, French or Japanese financing been involved, those activities wouldn't have raised the same concerns by the ANZUS allies.

Imputed motives and the opportunity for mischief explained why certain Chinese investments were deemed to have crossed 'red lines' into areas important to ANZUS security interests.

Identifying proactively where Pacific infrastructure or services might be vulnerable to unacceptable investment would help the ANZUS partners work to take those options off the table through whatever appropriate means are available before they become a focus for geostrategic rivalry.

Recommendation 6: Advance and protect the Pacific's digital infrastructure.

One key example of the need to take a foreseeable shared security interest off the development table is the region's digital infrastructure.[63] Undersea cables are vital to the Islands' economies in the digital age and will only become more so.

The undersea cables transiting to and though the region are strategic assets both to the PICs for their economies and for the ANZUS allies.[64] Cables acquired a geopolitical dimension in the Pacific when China emerged as a major cable provider and owner, increasing potential risks of espionage or industrial sabotage.

The risks to the cybersecurity of the regional states and to the information-sharing needs of the ANZUS countries impose an obligation to act proactively on this matter. Clearly, Australia would react were the cables to be laid by China.

It's appropriate that subsea cables for the Islands, related infrastructure and regulatory arrangements be addressed before they become a red-line issue.

The Australian Government's recent bold play of underwriting Telstra's purchase of Digicel Pacific is a case in point.[65] While privately portraying it as an opportunity for partnership with the Island governments, the public narrative is one of cyber strategic rivalry.[66]

Financing and regulation should be the subject of appropriate and equitable arrangements between ANZUS and allied states with the Forum Island governments. Such public–private partnerships offer a practical way to support private-sector growth in new technologies across the region.

Recommendation 7: Support a 'Sea Highways' infrastructure program to improve national coherence and security.

The PIF states have committed to the concept of the 'Blue Pacific continent', and it's appropriate to use other land-based analogues for improving state security in the region.[67] National transport and communications infrastructures have played security as well commercial roles from Roman roadbuilding to the present day.

Marine safety and sea transport are major concerns for the Pacific Islands. Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are recognised archipelagic states. They have a high level of dependence on inter-island and other domestic shipping traffic for the movement of both goods and people. There's also been an unfortunate record of inter-island ferry disasters.

A program of developing and upgrading a system of ferries, wharves and navigation infrastructure would contribute significantly to meeting national security needs in responding to natural and human disasters across the region's major archipelagic states.

The benefits for large but relatively compact archipelagic states such as Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu could include slowing the population drift away from outer islands, greater food and health security and a reduction in lives lost through unsafe public and private inter-island transits.

This project has so many components in the construction and operational phases that it would offer substantial opportunity for developing a range of public and private partnerships at both the state and international levels. This could be a major stimulus in promoting private-sector development. Private-sector growth has been frustratingly slow in many Island states.

Recommendation 8: Support the clarification of maritime boundaries and the stabilisation of ocean baselines.

The August 2021 Leaders' Meeting of the PIF endorsed the Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise.[68]

The declaration recognises the existential threat that sea-level rise and the destructive effects of extreme weather events present to a region composed of so many low-lying atolls and Islands.[69] The solution proposed in the declaration is that the maritime zones notified to the UN shouldn't be altered subsequently by any effects of climate change.[70]

Recording maritime boundaries and stabilising baselines for those boundaries will contribute to resolving current disputes and prevent future conflict over claims. Meeting this challenge will involve building on existing regional organisational capacity and aiding national authorities to engineer shoreline stability.

The engineering aspect of stabilising shorelines and even whole low-lying islets and *motu* has raised the prospect of this having some red-line issues if it were to bring Chinese dredging vessels into the region. The risks of environmental damage and unaffordable debt are high, and there are attendant opportunities for economic coercion.[71]

Recommendation 9: Take steps to integrate and implement key elements of the Pacific Step-Up, Pacific Reset and Pacific Pledge to support the Blue Pacific Initiative.

Australia has already identified a range of activities and projects intended to advance the Blue Pacific Initiative.[72] So, too, have New Zealand and the US.

The ANZUS allies can achieve useful synergies to assist the PIF to achieve its 2050 strategic development agenda by integrating the relevant elements of their separate regional programs—the Step-Up, the Reset and the Pacific Pledge.

This shouldn't be limited to the ANZUS partners but should include the ANZUS Plus consultations.

Given the length in time and the breadth of coverage of the Blue Pacific strategy, considerable demands will be made on close and sympathetic relations with the PIF leaders and the Forum Island states individually.

Policy coordination and integration should be promoted by an enhanced program of bureaucratic attachments between and among the ANZUS partners and FIC counterparts.

Notes

1 John Howard, '50 years of the Australia – United States alliance', address at reception on the occasion of 50 years of the alliance, Sydney, 30 May 2001, online.

2 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Inquiry into Australia's defence relationships with Pacific island nations*, Australian Parliament, March 2021, online.

3 'North Korea "considering missile strike on US Guam base"', *BBC News*, 9 August 2017, online.

4 Peter Jennings, 'ANZUS at 70: A crucial security alliance examined in detail', *The Strategist*, 11 August 2021, online. The article is drawn from Patrick Walters (ed.), *ANZUS at 70: the past, present and future of the alliance*, ASPI, Canberra, August 2021, online.

5 Australia – New Zealand Agreement 1944, Canberra, 21 January 1944, online.

6 Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America [ANZUS], San Francisco, 1 September 1951, online.

7 Trevor R Reese, *Australia, New Zealand and the United States 1941–68*, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, 124–125; JG Starke, *The ANZUS Treaty alliance*, Melbourne University Press, 1965, 208–217.

8 Office of the Historian, 'The Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS Treaty), 1951', State Department, US Government, no date, online.

9 Denis Warner, 'The shadow and substance of the ANZUS pact', *The Reporter*, 4 June 1964, 21.

10 Robert Langdon, 'South Sea regional council may grow out of Lae talks', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, August 1965, 34:27–29.

11 RA Herr, 'Regionalism, strategic denial and South Pacific security', *Journal of Pacific History*, 1986, 21(4):170–182.

12 Henry S Albinski, 'The US security alliance system in the Southwest Pacific', *US foreign policy and Asian–Pacific security*, Taylor Francis, 2019.

13 Nic Maclellan, 'The Nuclear Age in the Pacific islands', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 2005, 17(2):363–372.

14 'Delaying the nuclear-free zone in the Pacific', *Inside Story*, 26 August 2013, online.

15 *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987*, 8 June 1987, online.

16 Gordon Bilney, *Australia's relations with the South Pacific—challenge and change*, Australian Development Studies Network, Australian National University, Canberra, July 1994, online.

17 Hilarian Codippily, *Pacific island economies: toward efficient and sustainable growth*, World Bank, 8 March 1993, online. The World Bank found that region enjoyed the highest level of per capita aid and yet underperformed compared with the small island states of the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. The implication was that aid had been mismanaged and misdirected due to the region's geopolitical leverage and an attendant lack of prudent oversight.

18 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *The Pacific Plan for strengthening regional cooperation and integration*, November 2007, online.

19 Robert Ayson, 'ANZUS at 70: ANZUS and New Zealand', *The Strategist*, 30 August 2021, online. The article is drawn from Patrick Walters (ed.), *ANZUS at 70: the past, present and future of the alliance*, ASPI, Canberra, August 2021, online.

20 Pacific Islands Forum, 'Boe Declaration on Regional Security', 5 September 2018, online.

21 J Wallis, A Powles, 'Burden-sharing: the US, Australia and New Zealand alliances in the Pacific islands', *International Affairs*, 2021, 97(4):1045–1065.

22 Jennifer DP Moroney, Alan Tidwell, 'America's strategy in Oceania: time for a better approach', *War on the Rocks*, 19 July 2021, online.

23 US House of Representatives, *Boosting Long-term US Engagement in the Pacific Act*, HR7797, July 2020, online.

24 US Senate, *Honoring Our Commitment to Elevate America's Neighbor Islands and Allies Act of 2021*, S1774, May 2021, online.

25 US Senate, *Strategic Competition Act of 2021*, S1169, April 2021, online.

26 Lara Seligman, 'Pentagon considering permanent naval task force to counter China in the Pacific', *Politico*, June 2021, online.

27 Eerishika Pankaj, 'Australia's Pacific Step-up and the Quad', *The Interpreter*, January 2021, online.

28 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, Australian Government, November 2017, 99, online.

29 The Pacific Community, *Pacific Islands Regional Maritime Boundaries Project*, 2021 online; Anthony Bergin, Hillary Mansour, 'Island building rises as opportunity for China in the Pacific', *The Australian*, 3 May 2021, online.

30 DFAT, 'Pacific regional—climate change and resilience', Australian Government, 2021, online.

31 Marise Payne, 'Pacific Fusion Centre to be established in Vanuatu', media release, 19 October 2020, online; see David Brewster, *The Pacific Fusion Centre: the challenge of sharing information and intelligence in the Pacific*, ASPI, September 2021,online.

32 Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, Australian Government, 2016, online.

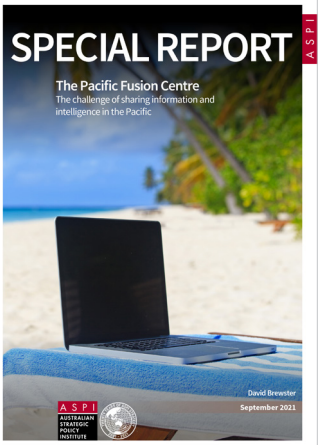
33 Ministry of Defence, *Strategic Defence Policy Statement 2018*, New Zealand Government, July 2018, online.

34 Joanne Wallis, Anna Powles, 'Shouldering a fair share of the burden? The US, Australia and New Zealand alliances in the Pacific islands', *International Affairs*, July 2021, 97(4), online.
35 Joanne Wallis, Anna Powles, *Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific islands: ambiguous allies?*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, October 2018, online.
36 Anna Powles, 'Identity, national security and influence: the "Pacific Reset" and shaping New Zealand's relations with the Pacific islands', *Perspectives on Pacific Security: Future Currents*, development bulletin no. 82, February 2021, online.
37 Powles, 'Identity, national security and influence: the "Pacific Reset" and shaping New Zealand's relations with the Pacific islands'.
38 Joanne Wallis, 'Strategic competition and the Pacific Islands', *Asia–Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2021*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, June 2021, 123, 126, online.
39 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), 'Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe', Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI), Japanese Government, 27 August 2016, online.
40 MoFA, 'The Eighth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM8) (overview of results)', Japanese Government, May 2018, online; MoFA, 'Chairs' summary of the PALM Ministerial Interim Meeting for PALM9', Japanese Government, October 2020 online.
41 MoFA, 'Chairs' summary of the PALM Ministerial Interim Meeting for PALM9'.
42 MoFA, 'Joint Action Plan for Strengthening Pacific Bonds and for Mutual Prosperity', Japanese Government, October 2020, online.
43 Boris Johnson, 'Global Britain: UK foreign policy in the era of Brexit', speech at Chatham House, December 2016; Laura Clarke, 'UK–Pacific partnerships and shared values', speech at the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, July 2019, online.
44 Cleo Paskal, 'Britain's new Pacific presence', *The Interpreter*, April 2018, online.
45 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'UK and New Zealand agree new partnership in the Pacific', media release, UK Government, January 2019, online.
46 Alexandre Dayant, 'Brexit and the Pacific: sink or swim?', *The Interpreter*, February 2020, online.
47 Tess McClure, 'Aukus submarines banned from New Zealand as pact exposes divide with western allies', *The Guardian*, September 2021, online.
48 DFAT, 'Pacific Step-Up', Australian Government, no date, online; Winston Peters, '"Shifting the dial", eyes wide open, Pacific Reset', speech at the Lowy Institute, Sydney, 2 March 2018, online; Office of the Spokesperson, 'US engagement in the Pacific Islands: 2020 Pacific Pledge', fact sheet, State Department, US Government, 1 October 2020, online.
49 Clarke, 'UK–Pacific partnerships and shared values'; Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 'France's Indo-Pacific Strategy', French Government, July 2021, online.
50 MoFA, *Towards free and open Indo-Pacific*, Japanese Government, November 2019, online.
51 Moroney & Tidwell, 'America's strategy in Oceania: time for a better approach'.
52 New Zealand Government, *Advancing Pacific Partnerships 2019*, October 2019, online.
53 Jonathan Pryke, Richard McGregor, *China's coronavirus aid to Pacific islands is part of geopolitical game*, Lowy Institute, Sydney, 23 April 2020, online.
54 Henry Puna, 'We will fight back, together, and win back, together', opening remarks to the Forum Economic Officials Meeting, 6 July 2021, online.
55 A Erickson, J Wuthnow, 'Barriers, springboards and benchmarks: China conceptualizes the Pacific "island chains"', *The China Quarterly*, 2016, 225:1–22, doi:10.1017/S0305741016000011.
56 Dame Meg Taylor, 'The China alternative: changing regional order in the Pacific Islands', keynote address to the University of the South Pacific, 8 February 2019, online.
57 Johnny Blades, 'Outgoing Pacific Forum head warns about external influences', *Newshub*, 31 May 2021, online.
58 Blades, 'Outgoing Pacific Forum head warns about external influences'.
59 Soli Middleby, Anna Powles, Joanne Wallis, 'AUKUS adds ambiguity to the Australia–New Zealand alliance', *The Strategist*, 11 October 2021, online.
60 'Delaying the nuclear-free zone in the Pacific', *Inside Story*, 26 August 2013, online; Ema Tagicakibau, 'The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty: 35 years on', *DevPolicy Blog*, 22 January 2021, online.
61 Peter Dutton, 'South Pacific defence ministers lay foundation for enhanced regional response', media release, 8 October 2021, online.
62 Euan Graham, 'Mind the gap: views of security in the Pacific', *The Interpreter*, 11 October 2018, online.
63 Tom Corben, Euan Moyle, 'Connecting the dots: Australia and digital infrastructure development in the Pacific islands', *The Diplomat*, 6 February 2021, online.
64 Amanda HA Watson, 'Undersea internet cables in the Pacific. Part 1: Recent and planned expansion', *In Brief*, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, August 2021, online.
65 See Marise Payne, Dan Tehan and Zed Seselja, **'**Telstra decision to acquire Digicel Pacific**'**, joint media release, 25 October 2021, online.
66 Ben Packham, 'Taxpayers fork out $1.8bn to keep South Pacific telco out of Chinese hands', *The Australian*, 25 October 2021, online.
67 Pacific Islands Forum, 'The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent', September 2017, online.
68 Pacific Islands Forum, 'Declaration on preserving maritime zones in the face of climate change-related sea-level rise', 6 August 2021, online.
69 Rebecca Strating, Joanne Wallis, *Climate change and maritime boundaries: Pacific responses and implications for Australia*, regional outlook paper no. 66, Griffith Institute, 2021, online.
70 Donald R Rothwell, 'Line in the sand: how sea-level rise is challenging international law', *The Interpreter*, 12 October 2021, online.
71 Hillary Mansour, Anthony Bergin, 'Island building rises as opportunity for China in the Pacific', *The Australian*, 17 September 2021.
72 DFAT, 'Resilient boundaries for the Blue Pacific', Australian Government, 2019, online.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ALP	Australian Labor Party
CCOP	Committee for Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in South Pacific Offshore Areas
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FIC	Forum Island country
FOIP	free and open Indo-Pacific
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
IUU fishing	illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ODA	official development assistance
PALM	Pacific Alliance Leaders Meeting (more commonly now the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting)
PIC	Pacific Island country
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PRC	People's Republic of China
Quad	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
SALPIE initiative	Small and Less Populous Island Economies initiative
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
SPC	South Pacific Commission
SPNFZ Treaty	South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty
UN	United Nations

Some recent ASPI publications



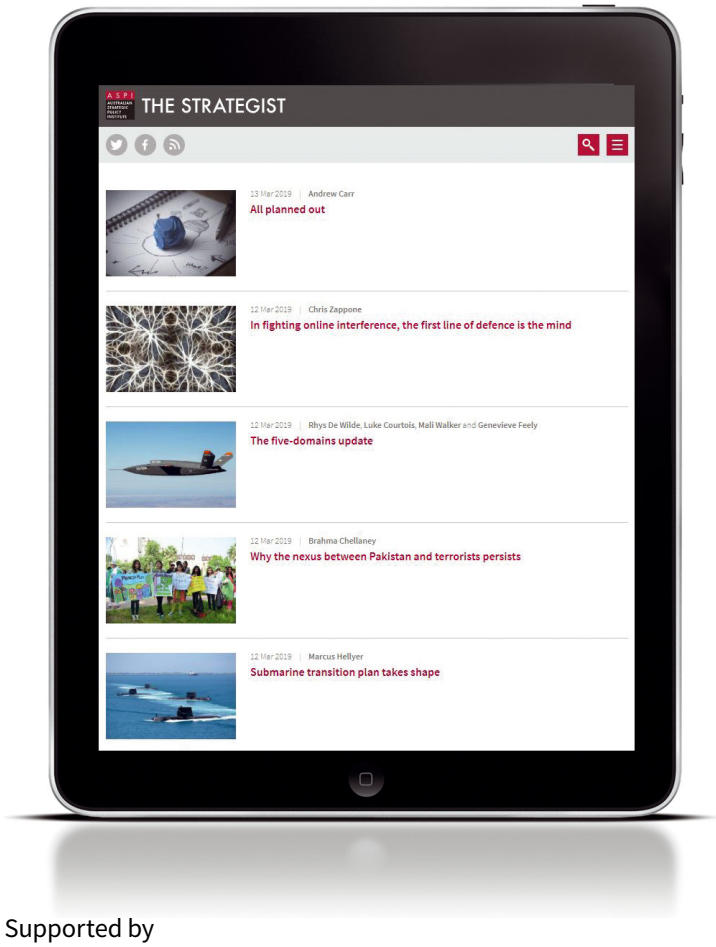
WHAT'S YOUR STRATEGY?

Stay informed via the field's leading think tank, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

The Strategist, ASPI's commentary and analysis website, delivers fresh ideas on Australia's defence and strategic policy choices as well as encouraging discussion and debate among interested stakeholders in the online strategy community. Visit and subscribe to an email digest at www.aspistrategist.org.au.

facebook.com/ASPI.org

@ASPI_org



ASPI
AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE

Supported by

LOCKHEED MARTIN THALES NAVAL GROUP

To find out more about ASPI go to www.aspi.org.au or contact us on 02 6270 5100 and enquiries@aspi.org.au.

Sliding-door moments
ANZUS and the Blue Pacific

ISSN 2200-6648