

The 2019 NZDF
Advancing
Pacific
Partnerships:

Ten different
views from
Pacific Security
Commentators



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Gerard Prinsen (Ed.)

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With the aim of broadening views on Pacific security issues, we asked a range of experts and commentators – balancing representatives from academia with representatives from NGOs – to respond to the 2019 NZDF policy document titled ‘Advancing Pacific Partnerships’. Contributors include Johanna Brown, Darren Brunk (Oxfam), Tess Newton Cain (Griffith Asia Institute), Beth Greener (Massey University), Julianne Hickey (Caritas), Mark Mitchell (World Vision), Apisalome Movono (University of the South Pacific), Josie Pagani (CID), Anna Powles & Jose Sousa-Santos (Massey University), and Joanne Wallis (Australian National University).

Dr Johanna Brown – contracted to the USA Government, specifically the DOD and USAID



What do you find of most interest in the ‘Advancing Pacific Partnerships’?

Brown: The broad and comprehensive nature of the relationship Defence seeks to establish with partners- one that includes “planning and acting together” (page 13), the emphasis on “people- to-people ties” moving beyond merely coexistence or cooperation with likeminded partners but points to a strategic acknowledgement of the importance to embed civilian-military integration into its operations and standard operating procedures.

The acknowledgement of the civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) imperative in addressing the region’s issues is welcome. However, CIMIC will not “just happen” resting upon a set of shared values and good

intentions. Going forward, it will be interesting to understand from Defence how it will operationalise this broad and ambitious intent across the organisation especially with regards to the training and education of its own operational forces. What specific organisational changes will Training & Education Command (TRADOC) undertake to meet the intent of this broad and comprehensive policy statement at the operational (and even tactical) level? With Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) and stability operations at the likely fore of regional responses, it would be critical to revisit, build on, and enhance the historical experience, cultural intelligence, and other respected capabilities of the NZDF as a trusted partner. Will Defence prepare for operational partnerships through enhanced and integrated training and education with a CIMIC focus? This strategic policy document is ambitious in its framing of “partnerships” and it will be interesting to learn more how Defence will organise and change to meet its intent operationally.

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Brown: The acknowledgement that “Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations and potentially stability operations” (page 7) are going to be the most likely type of operations in the region that Defence would respond to due to climate change and its inevitable destabilising effects. And further, that Defence must more fully integrate with likeminded partners to meet the challenges of these specific operations. With climate change adding to the already fragile context of many Pacific Island States, along with the other transnational issues facing the region, stability operations are more than a ‘potentiality’. With its past (and even recent) experience in regional stability operations coupled with the cultural intelligence of its personnel, NZDF is well positioned to prioritise, update, and accelerate its training and readiness for these types of operations, resting upon the “Planning and acting together” (page 13) at the critical nexus of integrated training.



What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Brown: Across the document there are various references to “peacekeeping”, “peace and security operations”, and “stability operations”. These are quite different operations requiring various specialist Defence and broader whole of government capabilities. Most importantly, these operations will require the most comprehensive and integrated whole of government (indeed whole of region) responses to be successful. It is critical to understand the differences in these types of operations and the circumstances under which they can take place in (from natural disaster to full violent conflict). A nuanced understanding of the differences in these operations and how they will drive and influence various capabilities within Defence and responses from the whole of government is required. It would

be an improvement to see this nuanced and advanced understanding around these “soft” type of operations, exactly the ones the Pacific region and indeed NZDF forces will most likely face.

Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Brown: The policy statement is very externally focused. How does Defence plan to engage itself, internally, to 'advance partnerships'. The document speaks to an external audience to advancing partnerships strategically with external likeminded partners, but what will Defence need to do internally as an organisation to identify “likeminded partners” within —in which to build the capacity and capability to advance partnering at the operational level. Where will the operational capability to build, share, and manage advanced partnerships, understandings and engagement reside? Further, I also believe this means a sharpened focus on comprehensive training and education around stability activities and whole of government approaches to complex and protracted instability.

What do you find of most interest in the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

*Dr Darren Brunk –
Humanitarian Specialist
at Oxfam New Zealand*



Brunk: It is interesting to see how the APP continues the trend of strategic documents before it (the 2018 Strategic Defence policy statement and 2019 Capability Plan) of emphasising the need to expand the NZDF's role in Humanitarian and Disaster Relief operations (HADR), without adding an additional level of detail as to what the NZDF's role should be in this complicated area of work. The NZDF has long played a constructive role in support of humanitarian responses in the Pacific – notably in offering its unique air and naval assets for overcoming the region's significant logistical challenges. However, there are many humanitarian roles that the NZDF should not play. Humanitarian response is a complex sector unto itself, and good humanitarian practice is always in development. The sector's experience has hard-learned over decades. In my own experience delivering training for, and working alongside members of the NZDF, it's not always clear that officers and soldiers are aware of humanitarian principles, technical and good practice standards for emergency relief, or the design of the humanitarian system. The APP was a missed opportunity to define the boundaries around the NZDF's humanitarian role in the Pacific, and how NZDF personnel should be trained to play it responsibly.

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Brunk: The APP seeks to reconcile New Zealand strategic aims with those of partner Pacific Islands by situating New Zealand itself as a Pacific Island nation. The primary security threats identified in the policy are transboundary and shared across multiple countries in the region. Common security challenges require collective action. This being the case, the policy adopts an innovative emphasis on relationships; that is, defining the best ways in which New Zealand can be the best possible partner to define and address common objectives and actions, rather than suggesting what those objectives should be. By articulating the guiding principles for partnership grounded in Pacific and Māori worldviews and relations, and outlining the actions required to embed these ways of working at every

level of the Defence Forces, the document demonstrates a commitment to working in the Pacific on Pacific Island terms to address common threats.

What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Brunk: The policy speaks at length of 'New Zealand values' that New Zealand will seek to defend (a total of 27 mentions), and the 'likeminded' partners New Zealand will draw on to promote these values. Yet the document neither articulates these values, nor prioritises the ones most relevant to the Pacific security landscape. It doesn't define the 'likeminded' partners who are key to safeguarding these values in the Pacific. Higher-order strategic documents have named states we might consider 'likeminded' – Australia, the 'Five Eyes' and EU, for example. But there has been retrenchment or even outright hostility by some of these traditional allies to some of New Zealand's own values and positions – be it around climate change, or aspects of the liberal rules-based order (gender, mobility and migrant rights, for example). This policy should map out by issue who New Zealand's 'likeminded' partners in the region are, considering how 'likeminded' partners around one issue may prove less so around others. Perhaps there are other emerging players in the Pacific who may be more 'likeminded' than New Zealand's traditional partners around some of the values we deem most relevant in the Pacific? An effective security approach in the Pacific should address this complexity.

Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Brunk: In addition to the need for greater clarity around the humanitarian space, the APP could also do more to address gender and climate change. To the extent that gender is referenced, it is only in the past tense – citing NZDF's past efforts to establish a Pacific Defence Gender Network. There is no forward-looking aspirations or vision for how Pacific security challenges affect different gender groups differently, nor how NZDF intends to build on its past gender work. It is a missed opportunity to enrich the discussion around human security, and to define the next steps for New Zealand's past positive efforts in the region to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This is a considerable gap within the Boe Declaration itself, which also makes no reference to gender. Perhaps this is a gap in the regional security discussion that New Zealand could seek to fill? Climate change is also treated in a one-dimensional way.

The APP plays up the new capabilities needed for the NZDF to respond to the effects of climate change – through increased engagement in HADR. However, the Boe Declaration emphasises the importance of realising global commitments made under the Paris Climate Accord, which includes emissions reductions. If one is to take the NZDF's expensive claims for new and additional capabilities to fight climate change in the Pacific seriously, then the NZDF must also account for its own role as a contributor to this security threat, and the need for an emissions reduction strategy for the NZDF.



**Dr Tess Newton Cain –
Adjunct Associate
Professor, Griffith Asia
Institute**



What do you find of most interest in the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Newton Cain: The aspect of this policy that I find the most interesting is the way in which the New Zealand Defence Force seeks to position itself, and by proxy New Zealand, in relation to the Pacific islands region. This document is framed on the premise that New Zealand does not see itself as an external power when it comes to the Pacific. Rather, there are numerous references along the lines of "New Zealand is in and of the Pacific". This is a significant self-descriptor and it begs the question as to what extent this has been tested or verified, whether domestically or with Pacific states and leaderships. As with many such documents that we have seen recently, emanating from New Zealand and elsewhere, positioning of this type can send different signals to different audiences. Adopting a framing of this type has the potential to show alignment with some positions and demarcate points of divergence from others.

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Newton Cain: There are a number of things that this policy has right. A clear emphasis on the importance of a rules-based order is significant and welcome at this time. I also welcome the support that is given here to Pacific regionalism as the vehicle for enhancing security in the Pacific islands region. The policy appears to be based on a strong understanding of the current regional architecture in this area and a recognition of the pre-eminence of this machinery for future engagement. This is an approach that all partners should favour rather than seeking to create new mechanisms that generate additional transaction costs for small Pacific states. Another very positive aspect of this policy is the recognition of Pacific strengths and the place that they have in the partnerships that this policy envisages. This makes a very welcome change from the 'lack of capacity' trope which too often characterises narratives about the Pacific.

What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Newton Cain: The main concern I have with the way this document is written is the use of the term 'partners'. It is used both to refer to Pacific island states and to other powers who are external to the region. However, it is clear from the policy that Pacific partners are not viewed in the same way as non-Pacific partners. So, using the same terminology to refer to both runs the risk of causing a degree of ambiguity or even confusion. I think this speaks to the bigger issue referred to above – the fact that this document appears to be aimed at several different audiences. It is clear that the authors of the policy have a good appreciation of the complexity of the current environment when it comes to defence and security in the Pacific islands region. However, ambiguity of this type may dilute the overall impact of the document and its key messages.

Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Newton Cain: The main thing that is missing from the Advanced Pacific Partnerships policy is a full appreciation of the diversity of the Pacific islands region. This policy is very Polynesia-centric and this undermines its overall value. Adoption of terminology such as is contained in paragraph 27, is

problematic as the words and phrases do not have resonance across the Pacific region as a whole. *Talanoa* is not a 'Pacific' concept: it is a concept that is recognised in some parts of the Pacific, predominantly in Polynesian countries. The policy makes reference to the commitment of NZDF to increase cultural capacity within the organisation and this is to be welcomed: priority should be given to building that capacity with regard to Melanesia and Micronesia. There is also a lack of recognition of significant sub-regional groups in this policy, especially the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement.

*A/Prof Beth Greener –
School of People
Environment & Planning
Massey University*



What do you find of most interest in the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Greener: The APP is most interesting for the explicit incorporation of Maori and Pacific values. The emphasis on 'he waka eke noa', the usage of certain phrases and concepts, and the diagram on p12 are particularly interesting for a formal government document. The diagrammatic depiction of a waka (te waka tahi) emphasises the symbolism in this document – unusual for policy documents that are known for their sometimes turgid, dense prose. However, admirable though the references to Maori and Pacific concepts such as kotahitanga (togetherness) and talanoa (inclusive dialogue) are, time will tell if such concepts have just been instrumentalised rather than genuinely incorporated into practice.

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Greener: The symbolism mentioned above. The Marae at Te Papa, New Zealand's National Museum, provided an apt location for the Ron Mark, the Minister of Defence to launch the policy. The location and opening mihi (greeting), waiata (song) and karakia (prayer) reflected the tone of the policy document itself. The document rightly emphasises New Zealand's Pacific connections through common language, values and relationships. At face value, then, the document is very appealing. It makes explicit connections between Pacific and Maori worlds, and, by extension, New Zealand. It also directly links both back to last year's Strategic Defence Policy Statement (SDPS) that elevated operations in the Pacific to the same level as operations within New Zealand, and, notably, to the region's recent Boe Declaration. There is some neat dovetailing between the SDPS, the Defence Capability Plan from mid-2019, the launching of the Pacific Defence Gender Network in August 2019 and the establishing of a Pacific Leader Development Programme, complete with some infrastructure commitments. Given the paucity of references to gender as a security and defence consideration, the launching of the Pacific Defence Gender Network is a particularly welcome event.

What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Greener: Although the document emphasises that it seeks to boost relationships, bolster capacity and increase resilience in the region, it is clear that all of these aims are motivated by others' engagement in the region (read 'China and others' between the lines). The reference to 'like-minded' reveals that this document also seeks to support the further development of strategic partnerships with countries such as Australia, the US and France. So, despite the rhetorical emphasis on people-to-people ties to

be pursued simply for their intrinsic value, the document also smacks of instrumental goals. This arguably wasn't necessary – partners could infer motivations however they wanted without bringing in the very geopolitical issues that cause Pacific partners such concern. Finally, it is a little alarming that this document is a 'Defence', rather than 'security sector' document. In the Pacific, there are only three countries that have militaries, Vanuatu has a paramilitary force, and yet all have police forces. The concern is that this potentially lends itself to an unnecessary militarisation of broader security issues.

Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Greener: Essentially the key 'take home' points from the APP are that: relationships are important, that Pacific values and narratives such as the Blue Pacific need to guide engagement; that New Zealand can lay claim to special relationships in the region, and that some new initiatives are forthcoming. These are admirable but do leave the document feeling a little like it has taken a few key points (most noted on one page – p12) and attempted to flesh these out to the status of a full policy document. What might have been useful could have been to indicate how other government agencies are also seeking to respond to the Pacific Reset too – alongside defence. That is, a policy document that indicates how Police, Customs, MPI and others are also Advancing Pacific Partnerships could have had more utility.

*Julianne Hickey –
Director Caritas, Catholic
Agency for Justice, Peace
and Development*



What do you find of most interest in the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Hickey: With the NZ Coalition Government's focus on the "Pacific Reset" the document reflects - through language and concept - a policy framed within the Pacific. Whilst being about defence and security of the region, the use of the "Vaka Tahī" Pacific Partnership model gave the symbolism of "one boat" and us all being in this together. It attempts to balance the sovereignty of states whilst weaving together the values, hopes and aspirations of the region. Through using the "talanoa" concept of sharing stories, it strives to create a collective empowerment for communities across the Pacific.

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Hickey: Climate Change is mentioned 22 times in the document, and it is clear that it is one of the complex disruptors that will need to be understood and planned for response. In creating this policy NZ has clearly listened to the concerns of Pacific Leaders, and observed the realities of what this means for communities in our region. It recognises that climate change is a threat to the security of the region – because it is leading to more severe weather, competition for resources (food and water) and potentially the migration of many. It therefore makes clear the need for NZ to have the capacity and capability to support regional security arrangements including for humanitarian and emergency response.

What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Hickey: The policy refers a number of times to our “ally Australia” yet perceptions are that the Australian government have yet to fully acknowledge the seriousness of the “climate emergency”. At the Pacific Islands Forum in Tuvalu, there was a significant gap in the Australian Prime Minister’s domestic and international commitments on issues such as the 1.5 degree Paris Agreement target. Subsequent statements by PM Scott Morrison have shown that there is little recognition of the impact of climate change on our pacific neighbours, and very little intent to change Australian domestic policy. This has the potential to create a lack of trust with the Australian Government by the “Blue Pacific” and a NZ alignment with Australia could undermine the integrity of our commitment.

Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Hickey: As the saying goes, the devil is in the detail and it would be interesting to delve deeper into “Capability and Capacity” (p26, para 59-65) section. There is significant investment being made into the growth of assets - both human and physical. It is not clear whether the billions of dollars that are being spent on acquiring aircraft and boats are the best use of taxpayer money, or whether they are being procured to ensure our status within the complex global geopolitical relationships. The question has to be asked whether we are supporting the defence and war machinery industry of other nations and whether we are procuring the right assets for the needs of a peaceful and secure Pacific. With the significant increase in personnel, it would be good to know what type of roles they were and how they were truly contributing to the relationships, well-being and collective good of our region.

**Mark Mitchell –
Head of Fragile Contexts
at World Vision New
Zealand**



What do you find of most interest in the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Mitchell: It should come as no surprise that the new advanced Pacific partnerships policy addresses the need for enhanced security. What appears new to me, however, is the articulation of the various threats and hazards that we face in the Pacific. The threats brought about by Climate Change are presented alongside the more usual geopolitical concerns, crime and the threat to our waters and fisheries. It is clear that Climate Change, however, as reports at the World Humanitarian Summit made clear, is a major driver of conflict, globally. Is Climate Change is a hazard to be addressed by our security apparatus though? This of particular interest to me, and I will be attentive to how this will be managed. The NZDF is, of course, no stranger to responding to disasters. Their ability to support logistics with air and sealift is noted and has been appreciated. However, to truly consider climate change as a security risk alongside their stability operations will require a more strategic approach that goes beyond response and includes a coherent appreciation of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction before the disaster happens and longer-term recovery post disaster.

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Mitchell: It is widely held that New Zealand is a country of, and in, the Pacific. We are indeed, part of the “Blue Pacific”, a continent of islands bound together by a commonality of identity, geography and

hazards. The vision espoused in Advancing Pacific Partnerships reinforces the strengthening of the Government's regionalisation aims of the Pacific Reset and its reach more broadly across the Pacific. I think the real key to achieving this is the strengthening of the connection we have with the Pacific through authentic, long-term partnership. I am encouraged that this is demonstrated through a recognition of the importance of constructive engagement and coordination with all nations, recognised as equal yet distinct and sovereign. It draws on collective values, the things that we can agree on, and a focus on the international rules based order, which reinforces a regional approach rather than driving political or economic agenda based on individual national interests. In other words, partnerships that promote what NZ can do together with Pacific partners not to them.

What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Mitchell: I recognise that the Advanced Pacific Partnerships policy is a high-level and somewhat aspirational document that provides some positive direction towards the language of partnership. Where I feel it is limited, however, is in providing the reader with guidance on who we might engage with. Stakeholders in the areas of security mentioned are wide and multifarious and reach well beyond traditional state actors. Each stakeholder has a different priority, understanding and perspective that is important to hear and understand. In my experience, to build an appropriate and sustainable consensus, it is essential to ensure wide leadership, inclusion, and participation of local actors in decision making and planning. This approach, exhibits localisation and ensures that affected communities are at the heart of any response, in keeping with the government's agenda.

Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Mitchell: Whilst much is made in the document of the need to respond to the impact of Climate Change there is no discussion on how this should be done. As indicated earlier, this requires a strategic understanding of disasters and, more particularly, how to address a community's vulnerability to them. Yet there is no indication to on how to engage in these humanitarian concerns, the scope of government and non-government actors, or acknowledgment of humanitarian principles, standards and best practice. In addition, coordination and collaboration with all stakeholders through established mechanisms over the long-term is essential to effective and efficient disaster management. Moreover, vulnerability, negative perceptions of an actor's response to Climate Change along with socioeconomic disparities and other such factors may be considered sources of conflict. It is, therefore, imperative that all of these stresses are managed in a way that does no harm and that all partners feel included, in order to mitigate issues of insecurity.



*Dr Apisalome Movono –
Faculty of Business &
Economics, University of
the South Pacific, Fiji*



What do you find of most interest in the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Movono: The Advanced Pacific Partnerships policy is a timely and essential recognition of how New Zealand's role must be adjusted to become an exemplary and leading custodian of our Blue Pacific. The policy makes a bold attempt at addressing the complex situation that is the Pacific geopolitical and ecological context. More interesting is how the document recognizes Pacific challenges, acknowledges past commitments and identifies specific areas to which resources must be dedicated and actions are taken. The plan inspires hope in that it aims to address issues that some countries can only choose to ignore and perhaps avoid because of more complex and often external influences. Of most interest is that this policy sets higher standards for custodianship of the Pacific which I believe can have far-reaching impacts by rekindling cultural relationships, cultivating fruitful and multidimensional connections as well as fostering resilience and a strong sovereign Pacific.

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Movono: I think the Advanced Pacific Partnerships policy is positive in many ways which I believe emanates from the affirmation that New Zealand is a not just part of the Pacific but more importantly it is the Pacific. These Pacific ideals and acknowledgment of regional instruments and declarations bring to the fore the voices of the Pacific people. As such, the plan attempts to translate these ideas through measures that enhance its role as a Pacific custodian that has an obligation to be responsible. This document is, therefore, in my humble opinion, a necessary step forward in realizing that not only are we meant to be partners but that we need to be effective as a collective of responsible citizens of the Blue Pacific. NZ's leadership is reflected through this document and is a timely reminder of the need to not only re-set mindsets but work towards action that can yield desirable outcomes.

What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Movono: While the Advanced Pacific Partnerships policy recognizes the Boe Declarations assertion that climate change is a real threat, more conversations must be held around the issues of realizing the blue Pacific and its borders as part of a sovereign blue continent.

Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Movono: The Advanced Pacific Partnerships Policy has the potential to expand current definitions of climate security and create conversations on topics such as climate refugee relocation, permeable orders, relaxation of migration laws and relocation schemes as actions necessary for the Pacific. Historically, our forebears circumnavigated the Pacific and had well-established links that I feel this plan can rekindle and develop in order to harness the Pacific spirit. This policy nonetheless full of spirit and is a step forward in creating more conversations and hopefully actions that are necessary to reduce anxiety about climate change, vulnerabilities and increase resilience of the Blue Pacific.

*Josie Pagani –
Director Council for
International
Development (CID)*



What do you find of most interest in the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Pagani: Two things stand out: The direct acknowledgement of our 'shared Pacific identity', which signals a commitment to positively 'reset' the defence relationship with the Pacific. And a more explicit focus on values. We don't just go into the Pacific to respond to a crisis 'overseas', we share common challenges (a crowded geo-political region, the effects of climate change, poverty, and the need to develop). The measles crisis was a tragic example of our shared destiny. While the impacts were more devastating in the Pacific, the crisis began in New Zealand.

Doubling down on the commitment to regional approaches is a positive sign, particularly doing this through a Pacific lens; the reference to 'Talanoa' for example - a uniquely Pacific way of expressing inclusiveness and participation - and the 'Vaka Tahi' (one boat) Pacific Partnership model. Embedding these Pacific concepts sends a positive message to our partners that this time we mean it. Also the deeper focus on values here feels more genuine. There's a continued commitment to stand up for a rules-based system, but also a stronger articulation of a commitment to partnership. And a carefully worded (so as not to offend) determination to stand up for values, even when they are challenged by some of our closest neighbours.

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Pagani: The whakapapa of the policy is clear. It's aligned with the Government's Pacific Reset (and the Strategic Defence Policy Statement), and that helps to strengthen the sense that NZDF is genuine about doing partnership differently. The Pacific Rest calls for 'deepened, mutually beneficial partnerships', and now it has a policy to guide NZDF's implementation.

The policy also provides even greater weight to New Zealand's primary commitment to the Pacific— 'on a par with New Zealand and territory as a priority'. It acknowledges climate change as a substantive and overarching challenge throughout the document in the strongest terms seen so far, while also not shying away from the political challenges in the region. It's good to see a determination to use 'existing structures' when working in the Pacific, rather than create new ones. The policy calls on NZDF to 'temper inclinations to create entirely new bodies and...investigate how we might invest in existing structures to maximum effect.' This makes local ownership of activities and interventions more likely, and therefore more effective.

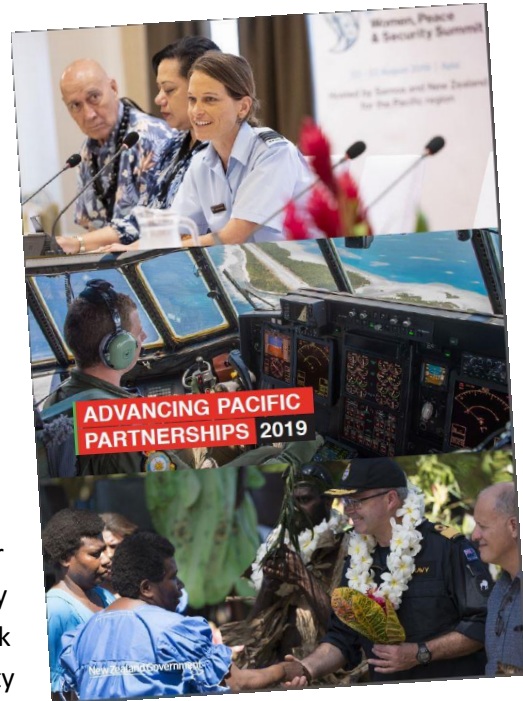
What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Pagani: Our primary concern is the total lack of reference to New Zealand NGOs active in the Pacific all year around. There is no mention of the importance of NZDF and New Zealand's aid organisations working together, sharing skills and responding in a coordinated way to emergencies. And yet our members have deep local relationships that have been built up over many years, and New Zealand's

aid agencies are often the first or second responders, alongside local people, when emergencies happen (for example cyclones).

The commitment to partnership in the policy is positive, but building relations in the Pacific requires the resources to be present in communities all year round, and to take the time to build trust. Many of our members (for example church based NGOs) have deep roots in Pacific communities. We can help NZDF connect with these networks, and identify the right partners in different communities (including church leaders and village authorities), not just during a response, but throughout the year.

This goes to the heart of what's missing in the policy. A commitment to 'localisation' - devolving decision-making and resources as much as possible to Pacific communities to guide international responses. This is now recognised as best practice internationally, and is in line with the 'Pacific Reset' which calls on us all to move beyond the traditional aid relationship between 'donor and recipient', to a more genuine partnership. The policy would be improved by signalling an intention to work more closely with New Zealand NGOs and their civil society partners.



Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

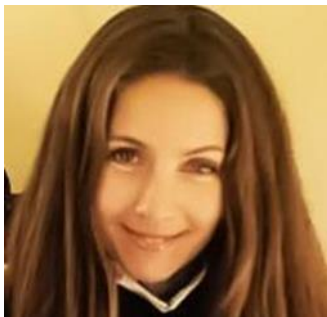
Pagani: The policy talks about the importance of 'people to people ties'; "Our concept of presence is broad and considers many levels, including people-to-people ties, official representation, secondment positions, regional security architectures, and operational presence. If we want effective responses, and stronger partnerships, it can't just be about 'partnerships' with government officials and ministers. Communities have to be involved. There's a strong commitment to support Pacific leadership in the policy, but what's missing is a clearer pathway to 'bolstered people-to-people ties.' Even when referring to government authorities, there is no explicit or direct reference to National Disaster Management Offices, which play a critical function in disaster responses.

We also noted a lack of specific references to the potential role Pacific youth play in development, and the security risks of not addressing high youth unemployment in some Pacific countries. Again, this is where coordination and consultation with the New Zealand NGO community is so important. Many of our members work with young people. This is critical to future security given the lack of jobs and the increased frustrations amongst young populations, particularly in places like Solomons and Bougainville. We wondered why there was no reference to the 'Oslo Guidelines' (The Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief) as a key document guiding how civil society and defence forces can work well together.

Finally, while we welcome the overarching reference to climate change, transnational organised crime, and resource competition in the Pacific, there is hardly any mention of the security risks of not

prioritising poverty reduction. In a region that is highly aid dependent, where malnutrition amongst local children sits uncomfortably alongside tourist resorts, and rates of stunting amongst local children is one of the highest in the world, poverty reduction should be given higher priority. We recognise that this isn't an operational document, but a lot of questions remain about what this all mean in terms of implementation. The policy rightly acknowledges – 'Alongside our work with Pacific partners, prioritising cooperation with likeminded partners is fundamental to the Advancing Pacific Partnerships approach.' That should include New Zealand's aid NGOs and their partners in the Pacific.

*Jose Sousa-Santos –
Joint Centre for Disaster
Research Massey, and
Anna Powles – Centre for
Defence and Security
Studies, Massey*



What do you find of most interest in the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Powles & Sousa-Santos: The Advancing Pacific Partnerships assessment is the latest in a stable of Defence strategies and policies which have fleshed out the Pacific Reset in a manner we have not seen as consistently nor as confidently from the Reset's lead agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The assessment seeks to align the Ministry of Defence's strategic policy settings with the Pacific Reset and translate policy into a regional approach which, interestingly, foregrounds culture in a manner reminiscent of Operation Bel Isi in Bougainville. The assessment seeks to achieve this through the Vaka Tahī Pacific Partnership Model for Defence engagement by incorporating cultural concepts such as the Maori concept of kotahitanga (togetherness) and the Polynesian concept of talanoa (inclusive dialogue). In doing so, the APP seeks to situate New Zealand as a Pacific country however the APP is riddled by the same tension which permeates the broader Pacific Reset and New Zealand's relationship with the Pacific as a whole: is New Zealand truly a Pacific country?

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Powles & Sousa-Santos: The APP is firmly anchored in the Reset narrative, specifically the three drivers of the Reset outlined in the 2017 Cabinet Paper: NZ's Pacific identity; national security; and shared prosperity. The introduction of a culturally appropriate model of engagement understandably resonates with Pacific partners and will underpin the success and effectiveness of New Zealand's approach, however it is noteworthy that it references the Polynesian concept of talanoa which is not a pan-regional concept. It rightly echoes the 2018 Strategic Defence Policy Statement and 2018 Defence Assessment "The Climate Crisis: Defence Readiness and Responsibilities" by citing the complex disruptors: the Pacific's shifting and contested strategic environment, the rise of non-traditional security challenges from transnational crime to climate change and resource competition. It also clearly identifies the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security and the Blue Pacific as guiding frameworks for Defence engagement signalling recognition of the increasing need to support and build resilience into the regional security architecture. Notably, and in contrast with previous MoD statements, the assessment only references China once (in the context of the Pacific Islands Forum

dialogue partners). This serves to rightly draw the focus back to the Pacific and away from the “countering China” narrative (although the two are mutually reinforcing).

What do you think could be done to improve the ‘Advancing Pacific Partnerships’?

Powles & Sousa-Santos: The APP captures the intention, spirit and principles which underpin the Pacific Reset as laid out in the 2018 Cabinet Paper. How it could be improved requires stepping back to reflect on why there was a need for a Pacific Reset in the first place. The Reset architecture, including this assessment, consistently cite the evolving geopolitical environment and Pacific agency in relation to New Zealand’s decline in influence, however, an evaluation of New Zealand policies in the Pacific, including its defence engagement through the Mutual Assistance Programme, has not been rigorously undertaken to ensure that policies are fit for purpose and reflect a coherent and joined up – NZ Inc – approach. Moreover, the discussion of likeminded partners amplifies the APP’s ambiguity between Pacific partners and New Zealand’s “likeminded partners” (which are sometimes one and the same – but not always). This tension won’t be reconciled easily.

Is there anything missing from the ‘Advancing Pacific Partnerships’?

Powles & Sousa-Santos: The APP packs in a lot of ideas and concepts and for that reason it feels more like part of an ongoing conversation than a static document. However, there are number of elements missing from the assessment. First, how will the principle of partnership advanced by the APP be mirrored across NZ Inc?; Second, how will the concepts of kotahitanga (togetherness) and talanoa (inclusive dialogue) be translated from principle to every day practice? If not done effectively and with genuine commitment and understanding, the use of cultural norms becomes purely transactional and symbolic. And third, despite the fact that two out of three New Zealand deployments over the past three decades have taken place in Melanesian states (Bougainville/Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands), the APP, through the adoption of the talanoa concept, reflects a frequent criticism of the Pacific Reset that it is, in fact, a ‘Polynesia Reset’.

Dr Joanne Wallis
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What do you find of most interest in the ‘Advancing Pacific Partnerships’?

Wallis: The emphasis on identifying and promoting the priorities of Pacific Island states is refreshing, as this is too often overlooked by regional powers. Stemming from this, the policy foregrounds the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, particularly its emphasis on an expanded concept of security that includes the importance of climate change. Building on this, the Vaka Tahi Pacific Partnership Model seems to chart an ambitious course towards building New Zealand’s partnerships across the region in pursuit of this expanded concept of security.

Yet the policy appears almost too good to be true; it is strong on its rhetorical support for Pacific priorities, but what happens when those priorities clash with those of New Zealand? For example, there is veiled language about promoting the resilience of Pacific Island states from external

interference. While New Zealand has been much more reticent than Australia to explicitly articulate concerns about China's increased influence in the region, it does have a legitimate strategic interest in limiting the presence of a power with interests potentially inimical to its own. How will it manage a clash between its own interests and the priorities of Pacific Island states?

What do you think the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships' has right?

Wallis: The policy reflects many of the recommendations made by commentators about how New Zealand (and other traditional Pacific partners, such as Australia and the United States) should engage with the Pacific Islands. It rightly emphasises the need to develop cultural awareness, build people-to-people relationships and to identify and advance shared security interests. The policy is right to continue the New Zealand government's approach of recognising that 'New Zealand is in and of the Pacific'; while New Zealand lacks 'hard' military and economic power it has vastly more 'soft' power than other partners because of its willingness to explicitly acknowledge its membership of the region. The policy also devotes considerable attention to the role of regional security architectures, which often receive insufficient attention in the strategic and foreign policies of states interested in the Pacific Islands. With the number of external partners engaging in the region rising, promoting regional platforms from which Pacific Island states can engage with them collectively, and coordinate their support, will be increasingly important.

What do you think could be done to improve the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Wallis: The policy is right to emphasise the need for 'likeminded partners' to work together in the Pacific Islands. But it is lacking in detail about who these partners are and what identifies them as likeminded. Stemming from this is the question of how New Zealand will negotiate differences in interests, interpretations and approaches with its partners. Implicit in this discussion is that the most important partner is Australia (which is identified as ally), and presumably, the United States. Yet both states have markedly different approaches to two of the major security challenges facing the region: China's increased presence and climate change. This then raises the question of how New Zealand will get these likeminded partners to consult, cooperate and coordinate in the region, when their priorities and policies may be fundamentally different.

Is there anything missing from the 'Advancing Pacific Partnerships'?

Wallis: By its nature the policy is lacking in detail, but more consideration of what 'collective values' that New Zealand shares with Pacific Island states and its 'likeminded partners' is important, since this will determine the scope of its actions in the region. Similarly, as with many strategic documents produced in Australia and the United States, the policy refers to the need to promote the 'rules-based order', but demonstrates no critical engagement with what those rules are, whose interests they serve and whether such an order indeed exists. Similarly, the policy refers to an all-encompassing 'Pacific'. Although it acknowledges that different partners have differing relationships in the region, it does little to disaggregate the concept of the 'Pacific'. The Pacific Islands is an incredibly culturally, linguistically, economically, geographically and politically diverse region of states ranging from 1,600 people in Niue to 8 million in Papua New Guinea. The detail that flows from this policy will need to reflect that in order to succeed.

[End]