

Small States and the Changing Global Order: NZ Faces the Future

*New Zealand Conference
3-4 June 2017*

POST CONFERENCE REPORT

Event Summary

Conference Organisers

- The Small States and the New Security Environment (SSANSE) New Zealand project team – Professor Anne-Marie Brady and Research Assistant Toby Dalley
- University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

Funding Support

The event was supported by funding from:

- University of Canterbury (UoC)
- New Zealand Political Studies Association (NZPSA)
- NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme (NATO-SPS)

Venue

University of Canterbury, Ilam Campus, Christchurch, New Zealand

Number of Attendees

49 attendees registered for the conference

Overview

Over the two days of June 3-4, 2017, the SSANSE Pop-Up Think Tank brought together practitioners and specialists for a critical examination of the foreign policy choices of New Zealand. The *hui* combined expert short presentations by specialists, with structured discussion sessions on the challenges and opportunities New Zealand foreign policy is currently grappling with.

The objective of this conference was threefold:

1. To foster discussion and strengthen connections between experts and policymakers of New Zealand's foreign affairs, defence, and trade policy, and create a virtual think tank for further deep policy analysis, scenario planning, and forecasting on New Zealand's future foreign policy choices;
2. To allow foreign academics from the SSANSE project, and New Zealand participants, to discuss some of the SSANSE project themes through an examination of the foreign policy choices of one typical small state, New Zealand, as it faces the changing global balance of power.

3. To sponsor the creation of a series of targeted policy briefs on New Zealand foreign policy in order to provide contestable policy advice and deep policy analysis to the New Zealand government.

Conference Format

The two-day conference comprised 8 plenary sessions, with 2-3 speakers per session. Each speaker was given 15 minutes to present, followed by 5-10 minutes for questions.

The conference was structured to foster discussion between participants around the core themes of the small states project. This was achieved by hosting small group debates, minute papers, and full group discussions on pre-prepared questions following each session. Each day of the conference also allotted one hour for lunch, and 30 minutes for morning and afternoon tea to allow participants to continue their discussions after each session. Time was allocated at the end of each day for a group reflection on the day's discussions.

Conference Themes

Each conference session related to core themes of the SSANSE project, with a particular focus on the foreign policy of New Zealand. Central themes and questions of each session included:

1. How can New Zealand best balance economic, political, and military relations with the US and China? What current and future challenges and opportunities exist in our relationship with these powers?
2. What opportunities does New Zealand have to expand its bilateral and multilateral relationships? How can New Zealand engage more with the UN and other multilateral organisations?
3. Examining the role of New Zealand as a constructive regional actor. How can we better prepare New Zealanders to participate in a global market and as global citizens, at the same time as protecting and maintaining our society's political, economic and social rights?
4. Examining New Zealand's trade: what more does NZ need to do to improve its exporting and market access?
5. To what extent can New Zealand afford to promote a moral foreign policy? In what ways might New Zealand improve in its efforts to be a positive global actor?
6. How can New Zealand improve its security? Looking to the future, what will be core areas, priorities, and vehicles of New Zealand defence policy?
7. Small state theory: explaining small state behaviour. How can New Zealand partner better with other small states?

8. What is the conversation we should be having as a nation about our security now, in order to position ourselves to best advantage for the future? How can we enhance connections and communication between policymakers, specialists and the public to improve New Zealand's foreign policy expertise? What are the next steps to achieve this?

Registrations

Registration for the conference was open to students, academics, and New Zealand government officials working on and researching New Zealand foreign policy and small state theory. However, the nature of the conference meant that it was unsuitable for the event to be advertised or open to registration by the general public. Instead, invitations were sent directly to contacts in relevant fields, who were also asked to promote the event to other potentially interested parties within their organisation. In total, 49 people registered for the conference. This included 34 paying attendees and 15 Complimentary Conference attendees. Two other registrants cancelled prior to the conference and had their fees refunded.

Paying attendees included academics and students from a range of New Zealand academic institutions. Attendees also included New Zealand politicians, and senior staff from New Zealand's Defence Force, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Complimentary attendees included the SSANSE project directors, conference organiser, keynote speaker, and a number of students and emerging scholars who had been awarded complementary entry to the event.

Student Involvement

To encourage student participation in the conference, students were supported to attend through travel grants, complementary attendance awards, and subsidised registration costs. Students or emerging scholars accounted for approximately one quarter of participants. Five of the conference presenters were also students or emerging scholars.

Policy Briefs

Each speaker was required to submit a policy brief based upon their conference presentation topic, prior to the event. Where possible, policy briefs were made available online for conference participants prior to the event. Hard copies of the policy briefs were also made available to participants during the conference. Following the conference, all policy briefs were made available to the public through the University of Canterbury SSANSE project website.

Social Programme

Small States Conference Dinner

Venue: Local at Riccarton House, Riccarton, Christchurch, New Zealand
Saturday 3 June 2017, 6:00-9:30 pm.

Conference participants were invited to attend the Small States Conference dinner, hosted following the first day of conference proceedings. Approximately 40 participants attended the dinner. In addition to 'Thank you' speeches, formal recognition was given to the two undergraduate students who had received UoC awards, granting them complementary access to the event.

Conference Recordings, Media & Public Diplomacy

Due to the conference being held on a weekend when University of Canterbury IT staff were not at work, and also due to the technical limitations of the venue, it was not possible to live stream or record the event. As the programme of speakers and participants grew, it also became clear that the event had evolved from a traditional academic conference, into a 'strategic retreat' to workshop the foreign policy of one small state: New Zealand. Given that trust and privacy are essential for the success of such an event, electronically recording the conference would have been inappropriate. The conference therefore officially followed the Chatham House rule, and was closed to the media and foreign diplomats.

Instead of electronic recordings of the conference, university students were allocated roles as scribes during group discussions. Following the event, all scribe notes and minute papers were reviewed and compiled into a report, and sent to the conference participants.

To best achieve the project's public diplomacy objectives, all policy briefs presented at the conference have been posted online for public viewing, and have been made available to relevant stakeholders. In addition, a summary of the conference findings will be presented at the 2017 New Zealand Political Studies conference later in the year, thereby presenting the findings to the public in the spirit of public diplomacy.