

Talking Past Each Other:

Coverage of New Zealand-China Relations in New Zealand and Chinese Media



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Executive summary

News media, as key sources of information about the world and how it operates, play a significant role in shaping how local populations view foreign countries. As Aotearoa New Zealand navigates a relationship with China that is both hugely important but also complicated by the substantive differences that exist between the two countries, the further development of mutual understanding is critical. The news media in New Zealand and China, then, have a vital role to play in this process.

This report explores how New Zealand and Chinese news media cover New Zealand-China relations. It focuses on the most salient narratives in the coverage of three broad topics – the intersection of New Zealand and China’s interests in the Pacific, New Zealand’s balancing of its relationships with China and its traditional partners, and the New Zealand-China trade relationship. All articles on New Zealand-China relations published in the first six months of 2022 on Stuff, the New Zealand Herald, People’s Daily Online (人民网) and Global Times (环球网) were analysed.

On Stuff and the New Zealand Herald, China’s deepening engagement in the Pacific was predominantly depicted as an unwelcome development that posed a challenge to New Zealand’s interests. There were also less visible, but still significant, narratives that ran counter to this assessment. In the Chinese outlets, primarily Global Times which paid the greatest heed to the issue, New Zealand’s anxiety was dismissed as unwarranted, paternalistic, and heavily influenced by Australia and the United States.

The New Zealand outlets frequently portrayed New Zealand’s foreign policy as undergoing a careful shift towards greater alignment with other Western countries. This was said to be a reaction to an increasingly difficult relationship with China and, more broadly, a challenging geopolitical environment. There was, however, some dissatisfaction with this recalibration. On the Chinese websites, New Zealand was presented as having a strong relationship with China; at times, this was used to highlight positions taken by other countries deemed to be hostile to China. When engaging with NATO and the Five Eyes, New Zealand was seen as taking part in initiatives aimed at containing China.

Stuff and the New Zealand Herald reported on a trade relationship that had flourished to such an extent that New Zealand had become over-reliant on the Chinese market and was now vulnerable to economic coercion. By contrast, the Chinese websites made no mention of

concerns about New Zealand being dependent on trade with China. Instead, trade between the two countries was celebrated and expected to continue to grow.

These findings raise the concern that consumers of news in New Zealand and China are being presented with depictions of the New Zealand-China relationship that are often hard to reconcile with one another. The magnitude of the divergence may hinder the development of mutual understanding between the two countries.

Introduction

In November 2022, the Prime Minister of Aotearoa New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, met with the State Chairman of the People's Republic of China,¹ Xi Jinping (习近平), on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.² A press release on the meeting from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that Ardern had told Xi that New Zealand is committed to 'enhancing understanding' (增进了解)³ between the two countries.⁴

While New Zealand's relationship with China is hugely important, it is also increasingly complicated. The relationship's deep and valuable trade, people-to-people and other connections are accompanied by meaningful differences on issues like human rights and the rules-based international order. To effectively manage New Zealand-China relations in all their complexity, mutual understanding, including among the general population, is crucial.⁵

News media,⁶ as key conduits of information about the world, affect how local populations view foreign countries.⁷ Consequently, media in New Zealand and China can, and do, play an important role in facilitating understanding – and misunderstanding – between people in New Zealand and China.⁸ Despite this, how the media in these countries cover the bilateral

¹ In the interest of brevity, the *People's Republic of China* will be referred to as *China* in the remainder of the report.

² The title of *State Chairman*, 国家主席 in Chinese, is sometimes translated *President*. For example, the Chinese-language press release on Xi's meeting with Ardern referred to Xi as 'State Chairman', while the English-language version used 'President'. See "Xi Jinping Meets with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern 习近平会见新西兰总理阿德恩," news release, 18/11/2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zyxw/202211/t20221118_10977763.shtml; "President Xi Jinping Meets with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern," news release, 18/11/2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202211/t20221118_10977830.html.

³ The readout provided by New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade did not mention efforts to enhance understanding. See "Readout: Prime Minister Ardern Meeting with Chinese President Xi in Bangkok," news release, 18/11/2022, <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/media-and-resources/readout-prime-minister-ardern-meeting-with-chinese-president-xi-in-bangkok/>.

⁴ "Xi Jinping Meets with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern 习近平会见新西兰总理阿德恩."

⁵ In a speech to the New Zealand-China Council in June 2022, Chinese Ambassador to New Zealand, Wang Xiaolong (王小龙), went as far as to say that '[a] mutually positive public opinion is arguably the strongest of all pillars for the edifice of this important [New Zealand-China] relationship.' See "China's Foreign Policy and China-NZ Relationship in a Changing World," (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 1/6/2022), https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbd_665378/202206/t20220602_10697747.html.

⁶ For the remainder of the report, *news media* will be referred to simply as *media*

⁷ Wayne Wanta, Guy Golan, and Cheolhan Lee, "Agenda Setting and International News: Media Influence on Public Perceptions of Foreign Nations," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (2004); Spiro Kioussis and Xu Wu, "International Agenda-Building and Agenda-Setting: Exploring the Influence of Public Relations Counsel on US News Media and Public Perceptions of Foreign Nations," *International Communication Gazette* 70, no. 1 (2008), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1748048507084578>.

⁸ An Asia New Zealand Foundation poll in June 2022 found that 58% of New Zealanders view China as a threat, a significant drop from the year before. Negative media coverage of China was cited as an important

relationship remains an understudied subject. Previous work has suggested that Chinese media presents issues central to New Zealand's relationship with China in ways that those accustomed to New Zealand media coverage may struggle to recognise. This was particularly acute for depictions of New Zealand's agency, national interests and concerns raised about China's behaviour.⁹

This report is intended to further contribute to the understanding of how New Zealand and Chinese media cover New Zealand-China relations. It explores narratives around three topics in which New Zealand and China intersect – firstly, China's engagement in the Pacific, secondly, New Zealand's position vis-à-vis China and its traditional partners, and finally, New Zealand-China trade. Articles from four news websites were analysed: *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald* from New Zealand and *People's Daily Online* (人民网) and *Global Times* (环球网) from China.

New Zealand's concerns about China's engagement in the Pacific, widely reported and discussed on *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald*, were, when acknowledged, largely dismissed or attributed to outside influence on *People's Daily Online* and *Global Times*. In the New Zealand outlets, New Zealand was seen as carefully recalibrating its relationship with China, in part due to unwelcome changes in China's behaviour. The Chinese outlets, by contrast, focused on the strengths of the relationship and compared New Zealand's approach to China with stances taken by countries deemed to be less friendly. New Zealand's engagement with the Five Eyes intelligence arrangement and its attendance at the Madrid NATO Summit were viewed negatively. When it came to the trade relationship, the New Zealand media paid close attention to concerns about New Zealand being over-reliant on trade with China and the risks of economic coercion from China. In the Chinese outlets, however, bilateral trade was presented in strongly positive terms. There was no mention of concerns about New Zealand being economically over-reliant on China.

These findings show that there are significant differences in how news media in New Zealand and China present New Zealand-China relations. At times, the divergences are so great that they are mutually incompatible and may obstruct the development of mutual understanding between the two countries.

factor in the change. See "Twenty-Five Years of New Zealanders' Views of Asia," Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2022, <https://www.asianz.org.nz/research/twenty-five-years-of-new-zealanders-views-of-asia/>; Thomas Manch, "More Than Half of New Zealanders Now See China as a 'Threat', Survey Shows," *Stuff*, 22/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/129034519/more-than-half-of-new-zealanders-now-see-china-as-a-threat-survey-shows>.

⁹ Caleb Hoyle, *A Model Relationship? Chinese Media Coverage of New Zealand-China Relations* (Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre, 2021). https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1985292/A-Model-Relationship-Chinese-Media-Coverage-of-New-Zealand-China-Relations.pdf.

Method

All articles that mentioned both ‘New Zealand’ and ‘China’ published on *Stuff*, the *New Zealand Herald*, *People’s Daily Online* and *Global Times* between the 1st of January and the 1st of July 2022 were examined for their relevance to New Zealand-China relations. Google’s function to search within an individual website was used to ensure that no articles were missed.¹⁰ All articles unrelated to New Zealand-China relations were then excluded, and the topics and themes in the remaining articles, a total of 388, were analysed. The three broad topics examined in this report, China in the Pacific, New Zealand’s balancing of its relationships with China and traditional partners, and New Zealand-China trade, were chosen because of the high frequency with which they appeared. The four news outlets were chosen for their influence; in addition, to provide a greater variety of news styles, the roles of the Chinese media outlets within the party-state media system were also considered.

Stuff is privately owned by its CEO and holds the largest audience of any news organisation in New Zealand.¹¹ Its website is New Zealand’s most-read news website.¹² The *New Zealand Herald*, *Stuff*’s main competitor, is New Zealand’s second-most-visited news website and is owned by New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME), a publicly listed company.¹³

People’s Daily Online describes itself as the ‘online version of the *People’s Daily*’ (网上的人民日报)¹⁴ and is the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (中国共产党中央委员会).¹⁵ Because of this relationship with the Central Committee, it can provide insights into the views of the Chinese Communist Party’s top leadership.¹⁶

¹⁰ For example, site:huanqiu.com “新西兰” “中国”

¹¹ "Stuff Retains Largest National Audience," StopPress, 2022, <https://stoppress.co.nz/news/stuff-retains-largest-national-audience/>; Susan Edmunds, "Stuff Maintains Its Dominance of New Zealand News Market," *Stuff*, 26/8/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/300671825/stuff-maintains-its-dominance-of-new-zealand-news-market>.

¹² "Almost 3 Million New Zealanders Read Newspapers and Nearly 1.8 Million Read Magazines in 2021," Roy Morgan, 2021, <https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/almost-3-million-new-zealanders-read-newspapers-and-nearly-1-8-million-read-magazines-in-2021>; Sarah Baker et al., *Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership 2021*, AUT Research Centre for Journalism Media and Democracy (2021).

¹³ Baker et al., *Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership 2021*; "Almost 3 Million New Zealanders Read Newspapers and Nearly 1.8 Million Read Magazines in 2021."

¹⁴ "Introduction to People’s Daily Online 人民网介绍," *People’s Daily Online*, 2022, <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/50142/420117/420317/index.html>.

¹⁵ Dong Dong, Tsan-Kuo Chang, and Dan Chen, "Reporting Aids and the Invisible Victims in China: Official Knowledge as News in the People's Daily, 1986-2002," *Journal of Health Communication* 13, no. 4 (2008).

¹⁶ Yunya Song and Tsan-Kuo Chang, "Legitimizing Ruptures of Development Trajectories: Party Press Discourse on Rural Society in Transitional China, 1997–2006," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 17, no. 3 (2012); Haiyan Wang, Colin Sparks, and Yu Huang, "Measuring Differences in the Chinese Press: A Study of People’s Daily and Southern Metropolitan Daily," *Global Media and China* 3, no. 3 (2018).

Global Times (环球网) claims to be ‘the first choice information sharing platform for Chinese people to understand the world’ (是中国人了解世界首选的信息分享平台) with a ‘mission’ (使命) to ‘connect China to the world’ (联接中外，沟通世界). It is the website of the ‘semi-official’¹⁷ *Global Times* newspaper (环球时报) and under the auspices of *People’s Daily Online* and *Global Times* newspaper (由人民网和环球日报社联合主办).¹⁸

¹⁷ Jianwei Wang and Xiaojie Wang, "Media and Chinese Foreign Policy," *The Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 86 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2013.832523>.

¹⁸ "About Global Times 关于环球网," n.d., <https://corp.huanqiu.com>.

On China in the Pacific

Stuff and the New Zealand Herald

China's engagement with the Pacific was one of the most salient topics in *Stuff's* and the *New Zealand Herald's* coverage of New Zealand-China relations. A security agreement between China and the Solomon Islands, leaked in March and announced in April,¹⁹ coupled with a 10-day visit to the Pacific by Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi (王毅), beginning in late May,²⁰ were pivotal in driving the coverage.

Concern

The dominant narrative that accompanied coverage of China's involvement in the Pacific on the *Stuff* and *New Zealand Herald* websites was one of concern, sometimes bordering on alarm, at the prospect of China playing an increasingly active and influential role in the region. This was often presented as unwelcome development and a challenge to New Zealand's interests.

On *Stuff*, it was reported that 'Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern says New Zealand is concerned a new defence pact between China and the Solomon Islands will lead to an increasing militarisation of the Pacific.'²¹ Another *Stuff* article noted, 'Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta on Friday said the prospective deal [between China and the Solomon Islands] could destabilise the Pacific's security and would not benefit New Zealand, or its neighbours.'²²

¹⁹ John Weekes, "Pacific Tensions: NZ Raising Concerns with China, Australia 'Freaking out' over Solomon Islands," *The New Zealand Herald*, 28/3/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/pacific-tensions-nz-raising-concerns-with-china-australia-freaking-out-over-solomon-islands/BDIFSGXRC4645L2X2JEBHIGWXU/>; Henry Cooke, "Jacinda Ardern Denounces Solomon Defence Pact with China, but Says She Can't Just 'Drop a Whatsapp' to Xi Jinping," 20/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300569808/jacinda-ardern-denounces-solomon-defence-pact-with-china-but-says-she-cant-just-drop-a-whatsapp-to-xi-jinping>.

²⁰ Michael Neilson, "Sāmoa PM Says 'No Plans' with China over Militarisation Amid Pacific Regional Tensions," *The New Zealand Herald*, 13/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/samoa-pm-says-no-plans-with-china-over-militarisation-amid-pacific-regional-tensions/UWLYM3O2MR4RVLUXSAQLWG525Y/>; Thomas Manch, "Nanaia Mahuta Needs to Be in 'Hot Pursuit' of China's Foreign Minister, National Says," *Stuff*, 26/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/128771784/nanaia-mahuta-needs-to-be-in-hot-pursuit-of-chinas-foreign-minister-national-says>.

²¹ Cooke, "Jacinda Ardern Denounces Solomon Defence Pact with China, but Says She Can't Just 'Drop a Whatsapp' to Xi Jinping."

²² Thomas Manch, "Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta Says China-Solomon Islands Security Deal Will Not Benefit NZ or Pacific Neighbours," *Stuff*, 25/3/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/128164676/foreign-minister-nanania-mahuta-says-chinasolomon-islands-security-deal-will-not-benefit-nz-or-pacific-neighbours>.

The *New Zealand Herald* observed that Ardern had labelled the prospect of a China-Solomons security pact as ‘gravely concerning’. Such language was said to be ‘unusually strong for Ardern.’²³ Another *New Zealand Herald* article led with Mahuta warning that ‘China’s proposed security pact with the Pacific island nation risks “destabilising” the region.’²⁴

Several articles, both on *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald*,²⁵ contextualised concern about China’s growing ties to the Pacific by referring to the New Zealand Ministry of Defence’s *Defence Assessment 2021: He Moana Pukepuke e Ekengia e te Waka*.²⁶ Particular attention was paid to the *Defence Assessment*’s claim that the ‘establishment of a military base or dual-use facility in the Pacific by a state that does not share New Zealand’s values and security interests’ would be one of the most serious threats to New Zealand’s defence and security interests.²⁷

A Problem Caused by New Zealand

Some articles carried the argument that China’s growing influence in the Pacific was a problem that New Zealand and other Western nations had contributed to by neglecting their relationships with the Pacific, thus leaving a gap that was being filled by China. On the *New*

²³ Audrey Young, "Audrey Young: Ardern Takes Unusually Strong Stand on China," *The New Zealand Herald*, 28/3/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/audrey-young-ardern-takes-unusually-strong-stand-on-china/AVQYQQASUZIB5PQSSOGRPVEHQ/>.

²⁴ Michael Neilson, "China Solomon Islands Security Pact: New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta Says It Risks ‘Destabilising’ Pacific, Continues NZDF Deployment," *The New Zealand Herald*, 29/3/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/china-solomon-islands-security-pact-new-zealand-foreign-minister-nanaia-mahuta-says-it-risks-destabilising-pacific-continues-nzdf-deployment/XMFQIVDYND2U2KT6AUGLDV6DX4/>.

²⁵ Michael Neilson, "Nanaia Mahuta Says China-Solomon Islands Security Deal ‘Very Concerning’ If Genuine," *The New Zealand Herald*, 25/4/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/nanaia-mahuta-says-china-solomon-islands-security-deal-very-concerning-if-genuine/X7NH33JA6BRQXL4RQHZZFCZZMA/>; Neilson, "China Solomon Islands Security Pact: New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta Says It Risks ‘Destabilising’ Pacific, Continues NZDF Deployment."; Thomas Coughlan, "Government Focused on Trimming Military Hardware Spend, Despite Ukraine War, and Chinese Pacific Threat," *The New Zealand Herald*, 29/3/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/government-focused-on-trimming-military-hardware-spend-despite-ukraine-war-and-chinese-pacific-threat/QABFLC4KNJT63LE2C5VRS2MT5Y/>; Manch, "Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta Says China-Solomon Islands Security Deal Will Not Benefit NZ or Pacific Neighbours."; Aaron Dahmen and Thomas Coughlan, "China Dangles Pact and Aid to Pacific Nations, but It Comes with Strings Attached," *The New Zealand Herald*, 26/5/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/china-dangles-pact-and-aid-to-pacific-nations-but-it-comes-with-strings-attached/JATLBZUO7K4PUKZJ2YFUBFJ4OU/>. Thomas Manch, "NZ Defence Secretary Raises Solomon Islands Concerns with Chinese General," *Stuff*, 6/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/128257356/nz-defence-secretary-raises-solomon-islands-concerns-with-chinese-general>.

²⁶ *Defence Assessment 2021 - He Moana Pukepuke E Ekengia E Te Waka: A Rough Sea Can Still Be Navigated*, Manatū Kaupapa Waonga New Zealand Ministry of Defence (2021), <https://www.defence.govt.nz/assets/publication/file/Defence-Assessment-2021.pdf>.

²⁷ *Defence Assessment 2021 - He Moana Pukepuke E Ekengia E Te Waka: A Rough Sea Can Still Be Navigated*, 23.

Zealand Herald, it was remarked that '[t]he Government is being criticised for letting its relationships with Pacific islands drift, as China tries to boost its influence in the region',²⁸ and that New Zealand needs to question whether the depth of its relationships with Pacific countries 'match[es] the rhetoric.'²⁹ Another article on the *New Zealand Herald* website, an opinion piece by journalist Heather du Plessis-Allan, stated that 'China's move into the Pacific is a direct result of the West - including New Zealand - neglecting it.'³⁰

Stuff's Political Editor, Luke Malpass,³¹ argued that '[i]t is not in New Zealand's national interest for there to be more Chinese influence in the region.' He further wrote, 'China is now clearly trying to pick off the Pacific Islands one by one, to create relationships and mini spheres of influence. In part, the pitch is to step in where either the United States, Australia or New Zealand is considered to have failed one or more of these nations – or not supported them enough.'³²

In another *Stuff* piece, journalist Andrea Vance, asserted that while the New Zealand government had been 'preoccupied' by the coronavirus pandemic, 'a vacuum' had developed, 'ripe' for China 'to exploit as it continues its expansionist policies.'³³ Thomas Manch, also on *Stuff*, reported on the pressure that the Government was under to be more proactive with its Pacific engagement and criticism that it was insufficiently proactive in managing its relationships with Pacific nations, thus ceding influence to China.³⁴

²⁸ Katie Scotcher, "Government Accused of Neglecting Pacific Partnerships as China's Influence Grows," *The New Zealand Herald*, 27/5/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/government-accused-of-neglecting-pacific-partnerships-as-chinas-influence-grows/HWVRQO2YJOD4GWYGBU5GKSM3E/>.

²⁹ Michael Neilson, "China in the Pacific: 'Depth' of New Zealand's Relationships in Question - Experts," *The New Zealand Herald*, 31/5/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/china-in-the-pacific-depth-of-new-zealands-relationships-in-question-experts/IX6S5X2CN7R4Q35NJFIKP2SZRA/>.

³⁰ Heather du Plessis-Allan, "Heather du Plessis-Allan: Is the Foreign Affairs Role Too Much for Nanaia Mahuta?," *The New Zealand Herald*, 4/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/heather-du-plessis-allan-is-the-foreign-affairs-role-too-much-for-nanaia-mahuta/7L2PZZ33CCEX4JBHK2F5KVCU7E/>.

³¹ In another opinion piece, Malpass asserted that China 'seeks to make its own rules' and to have its 'own institutions that others join.' A 'practical outcome' of which is 'a new security pact with the Solomon Islands, and a proposed sprawling economic and security deal for 10 Pacific nations and China.' See Luke Malpass, "Why This White House Meeting Is One Jacinda Ardern Probably Never Thought She'd Have," *Stuff*, 31/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/opinion/128809479/why-this-white-house-meeting-is-one-jacinda-ardern-probably-never-thought-shed-have>.

³² Luke Malpass, "Why the Ardern-Biden White House Meeting Comes at Crucial Time for the Asia-Pacific," *Stuff*, 28/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/opinion/128784720/why-the-ardernbiden-white-house-meeting-comes-at-crucial-time-for-the-asiapacific>.

³³ Andrea Vance, "Just as Ardern Was Hoping for a Foreign Policy Win, Her Government Was Found Wanting," *Stuff*, 5/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/opinion/128853242/just-as-ardern-was-hoping-for-a-foreign-policy-win-her-government-was-found-wanting>.

³⁴ Thomas Manch, "Nanaia Mahuta Needs to Be in 'Hot Pursuit' of China's Foreign Minister, National Says," 26/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/128771784/nanaia-mahuta-needs-to-be-in-hot-pursuit-of-chinas-foreign-minister-national-says>.

Solutions

Responding to the notion that China's Pacific engagement was a problem for New Zealand, several opinion articles proffered solutions. A *New Zealand Herald* editorial stated that 'China's diplomatic dance with Pacific Island nations may be stepping on rivals' toes but it's also a warning to New Zealand and allies that they need to sharpen their moves.' That is, to be proactive and 'innovative about their own contributions' to the Pacific.³⁵

Also on the *New Zealand Herald*, former Labour and New Zealand First MP and Ambassador for Pacific Economic Development, Shane Jones, held that in response to China 'trying to pivot our tropical neighbours away', New Zealand needs 'more practical effort and commitment' in its engagement with the Pacific to maintain its 'role' in the region.³⁶ Richard Prebble, a former ACT Party leader, writing on the same website, focused on New Zealand's capacity to defend its interests. Prebble maintained that, in the face of a more assertive and militarily capable China, the government needs to do more to enable New Zealand to militarily defend 'our interests in the Pacific', declaring that 'we have to be willing to defend our freedom [...] no one else will do it for us.'³⁷

Nicholas Khoo, an associate professor at Otago University's Department of Politics, argued on *Stuff* that 'New Zealand's policymakers view the US alliance network as one of the principal elements upholding the existing regional security order. And the China-Solomon Islands agreement alters the status quo in New Zealand's strategic neighbourhood in profound ways.' Further, he wrote that New Zealand, along with Australia, 'needs to invest much more thought and resources to ensure that the South Pacific does not become a cockpit of great power rivalry'.³⁸ Also on *Stuff*, columnist Josie Pagani argued that, in the Pacific, New Zealand needs 'to out-compete China. Not just yell "Get Off My Lawn" at them'. She further stated that New Zealand must listen to Pacific countries so that its support can better align with their needs.³⁹

³⁵ "Editorial: Diplomatic Dance in the Pacific as China and Australia Hit the Floor," *The New Zealand Herald*, 4/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/editorial-diplomatic-dance-in-the-pacific-as-china-and-australia-hit-the-floor/I2C4ZNQYQYSEUAFT3XIP62ZVNE/>.

³⁶ Shane Jones, "Shane Jones: Waiter, There's a Dragon in My Pacific," *The New Zealand Herald*, 31/5/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/shane-jones-waiter-theres-a-dragon-in-my-pacific/7YR2S46J6FCZUYWDBVP6PPWL5Y/>.

³⁷ Richard Prebble, "Richard Prebble: Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Has Lessons for New Zealand," *The New Zealand Herald*, 2/3/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/richard-prebble-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-has-lessons-for-new-zealand/5VAKPFP7LU7JYL2KG3GNN5A2FQ/>.

³⁸ Nicholas Khoo, "New Zealand Must Lead the Response to China's Agreement with the Solomon Islands" *Stuff*, 3/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128489174/new-zealand-must-lead-the-response-to-chinas-agreement-with-the-solomon-islands>.

³⁹ Josie Pagani, "Stop Telling Pacific Countries What to Do," 1/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128224030/stop-telling-pacific-countries-what-to-do>.

In an article published on both *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald*, Alexander Gillespie, a professor of law at Waikato University,⁴⁰ stated that New Zealand needs ‘to put its money where its mouth is when it comes to increasing assistance in the Pacific region. Expressing “concern” about China’s influence means little otherwise.’ He added, ‘[o]verall, Chinese influence in the Pacific is not necessarily something that must be “countered”. For the good of the region, countries should seek ways to work together’.⁴¹

Counter Narrative

A less prominent narrative around China’s Pacific engagement contradicted the idea that China’s expanding Pacific ties were problematic or an issue worthy of anxiety. The lengthiest articulation of this counterargument came in a *Stuff* article by China’s Ambassador to New Zealand, Wang Xiaolong (王小龙).⁴² Here, Wang wrote of the benefits of China’s engagement with Pacific countries and asserted that China understands ‘Pacific Island countries’ aspirations towards development and has responded positively to their wishes for economic and trade co-operation.’ He further noted, ‘China does not engage in geopolitical expansion and competition, or claim “backyards” and “spheres of influence”’, and that ‘[i]f there is “militarisation” in the region, that is definitely not attributable to China.’

Wang also stated that ‘China respects New Zealand’s historical links and traditional influence in the region and is willing to strengthen communications and consultations with New Zealand on regional affairs.’ He raised the possibility that New Zealand and China could ‘partner with each other to support Pacific Island countries to deal with challenges and realise common development.’⁴³

⁴⁰ The article was originally published on the Conversation.

⁴¹ Alexander Gillespie, "The Conversation: To Meet the Chinese Challenge in the Pacific, NZ Needs to Put Its Money Where Its Mouth Is," *The New Zealand Herald*, 7/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/the-conversation-to-meet-the-chinese-challenge-in-the-pacific-nz-needs-to-put-its-money-where-its-mouth-is/VVEQPGWBA7O47M2IPA7CW2PLJQ/>; Alexander Gillespie, "To Meet the Chinese Challenge in the Pacific, New Zealand Needs to Put Its Money Where Its Mouth Is," *Stuff*, 3/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300605637/to-meet-the-chinese-challenge-in-the-pacific-new-zealand-needs-to-put-its-money-where-its-mouth-is>.

⁴² In another *Stuff* article, Wang was quoted as saying that in the Pacific, ‘[w]e are not seeking greater influence or competition, what we are trying to do is to extend greater support to our developing country partners in our pursuit of longer term and wider sustainable development.’ Wang also dismissed ideas that China’s deal with the Solomons could lead to a military base being established in the country, stating ‘[i]t has nothing to do with militarisation, because nothing in that particular agreement suggests in any way, or will lead to, China establishing a military base or keeping a long-term military presence there.’ See Thomas Manch, "China Claims It Wants Development in the Pacific, Not Influence," *Stuff*, 1/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/128825046/china-claims-it-wants-development-in-the-pacific-not-influence>.

⁴³ Xiaolong Wang, "China: A Development Partner to the Pacific Region," *Stuff*, 10/3/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128013815/china-a-development-partner-to-the-pacific-region>.

On the *New Zealand Herald*, political commentator and analyst, Bryce Edwards, was more overtly critical of New Zealand's response. He argued that New Zealand was heading 'down a path of being friends only with traditional Anglo countries, bullies to our Pacific neighbours, and enemies with our biggest trading partner China.' Moreover, Edwards commented, 'New Zealand, together with Australia and the US, is ramping up the militarisation of the Pacific and pushing us towards a confrontation with China.' New Zealand's response to China 'pushing boundaries in the Asia Pacific' was, he asserted, making its 'relationship with the Pacific [look] increasingly neocolonial and threatening.'⁴⁴

Former Labour cabinet minister, John Tamihere, was similarly displeased with New Zealand's stance. In a *New Zealand Herald* piece, he argued that '[w]hat the Chinese have done is treated each Pacific and Melanesian nation as a sovereign nation and entered into arrangements with them, not as second-class citizens like we do, but as counterparts.' Tamihere further claimed that evidence for the narrative of 'the nasty Chinese and the nice Yanks and Aussies' 'doesn't stack up.' And that '[i]t is about time we shaped our own foreign policy rather than being dragged along by others.'⁴⁵

In an opinion piece on *Stuff*,⁴⁶ John McKinnon, former New Zealand Ambassador to China and current New Zealand-China Council Chairman, argued against the 'mistake' of 'view[ing] China through a single lens, in which it is seen as a threat to security, with territorial ambitions reaching down through the Asia Pacific region.' He added, '[w]e urgently need a more informed understanding of China, in which we see the country through multiple lenses and angles.'⁴⁷

⁴⁴ "Bryce Edwards: Political Roundup – New Zealand Should Be 'Friends to All and Enemies to None'," *The New Zealand Herald*, 1/4/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/bryce-edwards-political-roundup-new-zealand-should-be-friends-to-all-and-enemies-to-none/IUPO4D6EF5F6WKRWPPDCO65RPM/>.

⁴⁵ John Tamihere, "John Tamihere: China Has Every Right to Korero with Our Pacific Brothers and Sisters and Not Be Sneered At," *The New Zealand Herald*, 9/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/john-tamihere-china-has-every-right-to-korero-with-our-pacific-brothers-and-sisters-and-not-be-sneered-at/EWZL2SOJ2YPWVNZTRMNGPB6KTM/>.

⁴⁶ A translation, with several fairly major omissions, of McKinnon's article was published on *Global Times*. See Jun'an Chen, "New Zealand Media: We Can No Longer Look at China from a Single Perspective, We Need Multiple Lenses 新西兰媒体：不能再单一角度看中国，我们需要多重镜头," *Global Times*, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/471vNB99TKV>.

⁴⁷ John McKinnon, "It's No Longer Enough to View China through a Single Lens," *Stuff*, 26/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128437850/its-no-longer-enough-to-view-china-through-a-single-lens>.

Of the Chinese media outlets, only *Global Times* provided a significant volume of coverage on the intersection of China and New Zealand in the Pacific. The most dominant narratives differed markedly from those that predominated on *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald*; they did, however, bear some resemblance to the less visible counter-narratives mentioned previously.

New Zealand's Concerns

While there was some mention of New Zealand's apprehension about China's Pacific engagement, the Chinese outlets often presented it as New Zealand being unreasonable and overbearing. A *Global Times* article noted that Australian and United States officials were 'concerned' (关切) by Australian media reports about the China-Solomons security deal, adding that 'following' (之后) an 'exchange of views' (交换意见) with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Jacinda Ardern 'also stated that the China-Solomons security agreement was a "cause for grave concern", and could lead to the "unnecessary militarisation of the Pacific"' (也声称, 中所安全协议“令人严重关切”, 可能导致太平洋地区“不必要的军事化”).

The article also reported Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Wang Wenbin (汪文斌), as saying that countries with concerns about the security agreement 'should earnestly respect the Solomons' sovereignty and respect the decisions that it has made, instead of condescendingly thinking that they are qualified, and have the prerogative, to define what other countries should and should not do' (应切实尊重所方的主权, 尊重所方自主做出的决定, 而不是以居高临下姿态认为自己有资格、有特权界定其他国家应该做什么, 不应该做什么). Comments from Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare expressing his displeasure at the Solomon Islands being 'labelled as unfit to manage our sovereign affairs' (贴上不适合管理我们的主权事务的标签) were also included.⁴⁸

Another *Global Times* piece, a translation (albeit one with several alterations), of an article originally published by *Radio New Zealand*,⁴⁹ also noted Ardern's 'grave concern' (严重关切) at the 'potential [China-Solomons] agreement' (潜在协议). It asked, 'why, in what is

⁴⁸ Yixuan Wang, "Foreign Media: Solomons Islands Prime Minister Criticises Other Countries for Interfering in Solomons-China Security Cooperation as 'Extremely Insulting' 外媒: 所罗门群岛总理批他国干涉所中安全合作“非常侮辱人”," *Global Times*, 29/3/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/4708DX5LAgn>.

⁴⁹ Emile Donovan, "Should NZ Be Worried About the China-Solomons Security Deal?," *Radio New Zealand*, 5/4/2022, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/the-detail/story/2018836909/should-nz-be-worried-about-the-china-solomons-security-deal>.

essentially a case of a sovereign nation exercising an independent foreign policy, is New Zealand reacting so strongly?' (对于本质上是一个主权国家行使独立外交政策的行为, 新西兰为什么反应如此强烈?).

The article provided an answer in the form of comments from Iati Iati, a senior lecturer in Political Science at Victoria University of Wellington, who observed that New Zealand (and Australia) 'always look at this region [the Pacific] through a strategic lens' (总是通过战略视角来看这个地区), 'when the words 'China', 'military' and 'Pacific' are put together in a sentence, it frightens everyone' (当你把'中国'、'军事'和'太平洋'放在一个句子里, 会把每个人都吓坏的). He added, 'at present, there's nothing to be worried about, this is just a normal relationship' (目前没什么可担心的, 这只是正常的关系而已). Iati also noted that New Zealand and Australia were concerned that 'their influence [in the Pacific] may wane (他们的影响力可能会减弱).⁵⁰

Global Times published another (partially) translated article from an English-language outlet,⁵¹ conveying similar ideas. It posited that 'the anxiety caused by China's planned security deal with the Solomon Islands shows that Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Japan are worried about losing their influence in the Pacific, however, they are struggling to respond' (中国计划与所罗门群岛达成安全协议所引发的焦虑表明, 澳大利亚、新西兰、美国和日本等国担心失去其在太平洋地区的影响力, 但在采取对策方面力不从心). It further stated that 'by making geopolitics their sole focus, Canberra and its allies have weakened their influence in the region (堪培拉及其盟友把地缘政治当作唯一焦点的做法, 削弱了他们的地区影响力).⁵²

A Coordinated Response

New Zealand's response to China's agreement with the Solomons was also presented as part of a broader response orchestrated by the United States and Australia. Following the signing of the China-Solomon Islands security agreement, a *Global Times* article stated that 'the United States has not only mobilised military allies in the Pacific, such as Japan and New Zealand, to diplomatically "encircle and suppress" the tiny Solomons, but further, it has also mobilised its media propaganda tools to distort the truth, starting rumours that the

⁵⁰ Heng Qiao, "New Zealand Media Ask: Should New Zealand Worry About the Security Agreement between China and the Solomon Islands? 新西兰媒体提问: 新西兰应该担心中国与所罗门群岛的安全协议吗?," *Global Times*, 4/6/2022, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/47UNOLjtTPX>.

⁵¹ Kathrin Hille, "Australia Should Blame Itself for Solomon Islands' Shift to China," *The Financial Times*, 4/4/2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/14fc7739-feca-4555-a399-2aed3b682243>.

⁵² "British Media: Australia Only Has Itself to Blame for the Solomon Islands' Turn Towards China 英媒: 所罗门群岛转向中国, 澳大利亚只能怪自己," *Global Times*, 7/4/2022, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/47VCwokbB5D>.

cooperation agreement signed by the Solomons and China is a “military agreement”, that China will “station troops” in the Solomons, and warned that Solomons-China cooperation will “destabilise the region and the world” (美国不仅发动日本、新西兰等太平洋地区的军事盟友在外交上“围剿”只有弹丸大小的所国，更发动其媒体宣传工具歪曲事实，造谣说所国与中国签署的合作协议是“军事协议”，中国将在所国“驻军”，并恐吓称所国与中国合作会“动摇地区与世界稳定”).

The article further suggested that ‘both China and the Solomons should be prepared for the possibility of the United States interfering in the internal affairs of the Solomons, and even subverting its state power. They should call on the entire world to pay close attention to possible plots by the United States and its Pacific military allies [a grouping which apparently included New Zealand] to violate the sovereignty of the Solomon Islands (中所两国都应为美国下一步采取干涉所国内政、甚至颠覆所国政权的可能性做好准备，并呼吁全世界都密切关注美国及其太平洋地区的军事盟友可能对所罗门群岛采取的一切侵犯其主权的阴谋).⁵³

Following a visit by Australia’s Foreign Minister, Penny Wong, to the Solomon Islands after the China-Solomons agreement had been signed, *Global Times* sought comment from Chen Hong, (陈弘), Director of the Australian Studies Centre (澳大利亚研究中心) and Executive Director of the Asia-Pacific Studies Centre (亚太研究中心) at East China Normal University (华东师范大学). Chen observed that ‘prior to Wong’s trip to the Solomons, she visited New Zealand, also in an attempt to draw New Zealand, previously relatively independent in its approach to China, into the “arena” of confrontation with China’ (黄英贤访问所罗门群岛前还访问了新西兰，也是在试图把此前对华政策相对独立的新西兰拉入和中国对抗的“竞技场”). Chen further asserted, ‘overall, in the Pacific, the United States and Australia are trying to also pull together a closed “clique”, with opposing China as its primary goal, to serve the United States’ hegemonic interests’ (总的来看，美澳正试图在太平洋地区也拉起一个封闭的、以反华为主要目标的‘小集团’，用以服务美国的霸权利益).⁵⁴

Exclusive Pacific Family

On *Global Times*, a comment by Jacinda Ardern stating that ‘the Pacific is our home’ (太平洋是我们的家) and Western concerns about China’s increased engagement with the Pacific were contrasted with comments from Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Wang was reported

⁵³ "US Delegation Runs Off to the Solomon Islands to ‘Chastise’ the Solomon Islands over Cooperation with China, Revealing Another Intention! 美代表团跑到所罗门群岛对中所合作“兴师问罪”，暴露出另一个意图！," *Global Times*, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/47j25f4xPoq>.

⁵⁴ Yunyi Bai, "The US and Australia Launch a ‘Diplomatic Offensive’ in the South Pacific. Expert: They’re Trying to Form ‘Cliques’, China Should Be Vigilant! 美澳在南太展开“外交攻势”，专家：试图搞“小集团”，中国应警觉！," *Global Times*, 18/6/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48Su6jstqws>.

to have said that ‘the Pacific nations are all sovereign, independent nations, they are not anyone’s “backyard”’;⁵⁵ they have the right to make their own choices and are not vassals of others’ (太平洋岛国都是主权独立国家，不是谁家的“后院”；都有权作出自己的选择，而不是做别人的附庸).⁵⁶

Related to Ardern’s use of *home*, Chen Hong, of East China Normal University, wrote on *Global Times*, ‘some Australian politicians and Western media are taking the opportunity [of Wang Yi visiting the Pacific] to smear and twist the truth about China’s development of cooperative relations with Pacific nations. They not only promote the idea that, geographically, the island countries of the South Pacific, along with Australia and New Zealand, belong to the same “big Pacific family” but also keep claiming that the South Pacific is “our domain” and is Australia’s “backyard”’ (一些澳大利亚政客和西方媒体借机对中国发展与太平洋岛国的合作关系进行抹黑和歪曲解读。他们不仅炒作南太平洋地区各岛国和澳大利亚、新西兰同属一个“太平洋大家庭”的地缘概念，还口口声声将南太平洋地区称作“我们的地盘”，是澳大利亚的“后院”).⁵⁷

This was not the only mention of Chen’s stance on the use of familial metaphors for the Pacific. In another article, he held that Australia’s use of the ‘concept of “extended family”’ (“大家庭”的概念) meant that Australia, New Zealand and the countries of the South Pacific belong to the same ‘Pacific family’ (太平洋家庭).⁵⁸ Such language was said to have the

⁵⁵ The New Zealand outlets carried both uncritical references to the Pacific as New Zealand’s ‘backyard’ or ‘home’ and condemnation of such views. For examples, see Scotcher, "Government Accused of Neglecting Pacific Partnerships as China's Influence Grows."; Malpass, "Why This White House Meeting Is One Jacinda Ardern Probably Never Thought She'd Have."; Christine Rovoi, "Aupito Keeps Faith in NZ Foreign Policy Amid China's Pacific Push," *Stuff*, 10/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/128909697/aupito-keeps-faith-in-nz-foreign-policy-amid-chinas-pacific-push>; Josie Pagani, "We Should Learn from How the Pacific Has Navigated between Superpowers," *Stuff*, 3/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128838121/we-should-learn-from-how-the-pacific-has-navigated-between-superpowers>; "Bryce Edwards: Political Roundup – New Zealand Should Be ‘Friends to All and Enemies to None’."

⁵⁶ Juecheng Zhao and Qiao Da, "The US Does Its Utmost to Discredit China’s Diplomatic Activities. Wang Yi: Pacific Island Countries Are Not Anyone’s ‘Backyard’ 美国竭力抹黑中国外交活动，王毅：太平洋岛国不是谁家“后院”，" *Global Times*, 27/5/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48AijNIPRZz>.

⁵⁷ Hong Chen, "Chen Hong: Obstructing China-South Pacific Cooperation, Australian Logic Is Absurd 陈弘：阻挠中国-南太合作，澳方逻辑荒谬," *Global Times*, 1/6/2022, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/48EstHINijx>.

⁵⁸ Another *Global Times* article, disapprovingly titled ‘New Zealand Media Sensationalise the Pacific Region Being Caught up in China-US Geopolitical Battle (新媒炒作太平洋地区卷入中美地缘政治之争), was a partial translation of a *Stuff* piece by journalist Lucy Craymer. It centred around the claim that ‘our “backyard” has once again become an arena for strategic contests, with New Zealand and its traditional partners competing with China, striving to maintain their position as Pacific Island nations’ allies of choice’ (我们的“后院”再次成为战略博弈的舞台，新西兰及其传统伙伴与中国竞争，努力保持太平洋国家首选盟友的地位). See Jun’an Chen, "New Zealand Media Sensationalise the Pacific Region Being Caught up in China-US Geopolitical Battle 新媒炒作太平洋地区卷入中美地缘政治之争," *Global Times*, 21/2/2022, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/46u1SUwMOqe>.

‘intention’ (意图) of ‘emphasising that China is not a part of this family’ (强调中国不在这个家庭之中).⁵⁹

Limited Positivity

New Zealand’s response to China’s strengthening Pacific ties was also, at times, presented in a more positive light. *Global Times* reported that New Zealand Minister of Defence Peeni Henare had ‘publicly stated that Pacific island nations are free to make their own decisions about cooperating with China’ (公开表示, 太平洋岛国在与中国合作方面有自行决定的自由).⁶⁰

In a further *Global Times* article, Henare’s stance provided a contrast to his Australian counterpart, Richard Marles’. Chen Hong, from East China Normal University, interviewed for the article, said that at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June, Marles had made comments that ‘follow the West’ (追随西方).⁶¹ Chen remarked that Marles had made a ‘misjudgement about the legitimate building up of China’s military (对中国正当军事建设进行的错误判断) - ‘an expression of China-phobia and reflective of the “China-threat theory” concocted by Australia.’ (是恐华臆想症的一种表现, 也是澳大利亚炮制“中国威胁论”的体现).⁶²

An article published on both *People’s Daily Online* and *Global Times* reported on a video call between China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his New Zealand counterpart Nanaia Mahuta and differed in tone from much of what was published on China and New Zealand’s Pacific-related engagement on *Global Times*. It reported that Wang had said that ‘China respects New Zealand’s traditional ties with Pacific Island countries. In the accordance with the aspirations of the island nations, China is willing to continue to carry out more trilateral and multilateral cooperation projects and jointly build an open, inclusive united and

⁵⁹ Qiao Da and Tingge Zhang, "Australian Foreign Minister Rushes Off to Butter up Fiji. Expert: Australian Foreign Minister Wants to Play the Role of Parent and Impose Its Will on Others 澳外长急赴斐济拉关系, 专家: 澳俨然想扮家长角色, 把意志强加别人," *Global Times*, 28/5/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48BVI3eDPPH>.

⁶⁰ Shan Li and Zhuoqian He, "New Zealand Defence Minister’s Stance During the ‘Shangri-La Summit’: Pacific Island Countries Are Free to Decide to Cooperate with China 新西兰防长“香会”期间表态: 太平洋岛国有决定与中国合作的自由," *Global Times*, 11/6/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48NfrQvCVkv>. Henare was also reported as saying “‘open dialogue’ is key to managing security relations with China’, [and] ‘meeting with the Chinese side was not a coincidence, it was to ensure we are able to listen to one another, and do so in a very direct manner’ (“公开对话”是处理与中国安全关系的关键, “与中方会面并不是巧合, 而是为确保我们能够相互倾听, 并且以非常直接的方式”).

⁶¹ At the Shangri-La Dialogue, Marles had met with Chinese State Councillor and Defence Minister (中国国务委员兼国防部长) Wei Fenghe (魏凤和). Despite his displeasure at Marles’ comments at the summit, Chen described the meeting, the first high-level talks between the two countries in two and a half years, as an ‘extremely important step in improving bilateral relations’ (改善两国关系非常重要的一步).

⁶² Qiao Da and Hao Ni, "China and Australia Hold First High-Level Talks since 2020. Expert: An Important Step in Improving Bilateral Relations 中澳举行 2020 年来首次高级别会谈, 专家: 改善两国关系重要一步," *Global Times*, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48On2JulEPt>.

cooperative South Pacific’ (中国尊重新西兰与太平洋岛国的传统联系。根据岛国的愿望，中方愿继续同新方开展更多三方、多方合作项目，共同打造开放包容、团结合作的南太)。 On the Pacific, Mahuta was recorded as saying, ‘New Zealand and China should, through bilateral and multilateral platforms, support Pacific islands countries to overcome challenges (新中应通过双边和多边平台，支持岛国克服挑战)。⁶³

⁶³ "Wang Yi Holds Video Meeting with New Zealand Foreign Minister Mahuta 王毅同新西兰外长马胡塔举行视频会晤," *People's Daily Online*, 14/6/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0614/c1002-32445404.html>; "Wang Yi Holds Video Meeting with New Zealand Foreign Minister Mahuta 王毅同新西兰外长马胡塔举行视频会晤," *Global Times*, 13/6/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48PUr5ml3lj>.

On New Zealand Positions

Stuff and the New Zealand Herald

On *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald*, it was frequently held that New Zealand was recalibrating its relationship with China as China's behaviour became more challenging. Broader geopolitical trends were also seen as playing a role in New Zealand's decision.

Challenges

In a *Stuff* article on Wang Xiaolong taking up the post of Chinese Ambassador to New Zealand, it was observed that 'New Zealand faces a number of China-related foreign policy challenges, largely due to China's increasingly bold moves in areas of economics and human rights.' It further noted that New Zealand had balanced the voicing of 'some concerns' about China's behaviour while keeping the relationship, particularly in terms of trade, 'solid', however, that was said to be 'getting more difficult.' The article added that '[c]ommentators say New Zealand is going to face increasing pressure to fall in line with Australia, the US and other traditional friends' while China's actions are 'becoming more brazen and it's [*sic*] military more powerful, making it harder for New Zealand to ignore.'⁶⁴

A *New Zealand Herald* article, also covering Wang's arrival in Wellington,⁶⁵ observed that 'China and New Zealand will celebrate a half-century of formal diplomatic relations this December, and while Wang [in a statement following his arrival in Wellington] highlighted the many "firsts" the two countries have celebrated [...] the relationship has soured recently.' The article further stated that in recent years, New Zealand-China relations have been marked 'with spats over Huawei's involvement in 5G network, concern over human rights abuses in Xinjiang, and the clampdown on Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement.' 'Over that time, New Zealand's stance on Chinese relations has drifted towards the more hawkish tone adopted by Five Eyes security partners, the United States, the UK, Canada, and Australia.'⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Laura Walters, "New Chinese Ambassador Touches Down in Wellington," *Stuff*, 11/1/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/127471690/new-chinese-ambassador-touches-down-in-wellington>.

⁶⁵ *People's Daily Online* reports on Wang arriving in Wellington were highly positive about China's relationship with New Zealand. They did not mention any disagreements between the two countries. See Xiaowei Chen, "Wang Xiaolong, New Ambassador to New Zealand, the Cook Islands and Niue Arrives in Wellington 新任驻新西兰兼驻库克群岛和纽埃大使王小龙抵达惠灵顿," *People's Daily Online*, 1/10/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0110/c1002-32328040.html>; "Wang Xiaolong, New Ambassador to New Zealand, the Cook Islands and Niue Arrives in Wellington 新任驻新西兰兼驻库克群岛和纽埃大使王小龙抵达惠灵顿," *People's Daily Online*, 10/1/2022, <http://australia.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0110/c408038-32328006.html>.

⁶⁶ Thomas Coughlan, "New Chinese Ambassador Wang Xiaolong Begins Term in Wellington," *The New Zealand Herald*, 10/1/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/new-chinese-ambassador-wang-xiaolong-begins-term-in-wellington/URAVCN5C5CAT7GFWU6CSAB45HA/>.

New Zealand's Rebalancing

The latter point, that New Zealand's stance on China had been shifting closer to the positions held by countries that have been more overtly critical of China, such as Australia and the United States, was widely expressed on both *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald*. New Zealand's approach was, however, still seen as more nuanced and moderate.

On *Stuff*, Chief Political Reporter, Henry Cooke wrote, '[i]n the last few years, New Zealand's position on China has slowly hardened away from the very dovish position that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) held in the earlier 2010s.' Adding, '[w]e are not in the hard-line rhetorical position that Australia and the United States are, but we are repositioning a bit.'⁶⁷ Also on *Stuff*, Geoffrey Miller, a geopolitical analyst, argued that New Zealand's foreign policy is 'slowly but surely' shifting towards the West.⁶⁸ Adding, '[i]ndeed, until last year, Wellington thought that it had found a way to thread the needle and balance the competing interests of China and the US. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February has forced New Zealand to align itself more closely with the West.'⁶⁹

On the *New Zealand Herald*, Bryce Edwards observed that 'following Ardern's visit to the White House [in May] and her Government's strong stance against China's increased diplomatic presence in the Pacific region', the 'growing consensus among observers of New Zealand's foreign policy' is that 'New Zealand may have finally jumped off its foreign policy tightrope act between China and the US'. 'Leaping into the arms of the US, at the expense of the country's crucial relationship with China.'⁷⁰ Relatedly, Political Editor, Claire Trevett, noted that 'Ardern has moved more toward the US as New Zealand's concern has grown over China's actions in relation to Taiwan and Hong Kong - but also its recent moves in the Pacific region.'⁷¹

⁶⁷ Henry Cooke, "In a Tense and Changing World, Jacinda Ardern's Asia Trip Was Worth It," *Stuff*, 23/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300571563/in-a-tense-and-changing-world-jacinda-arderns-asia-trip-was-worth-it>.

⁶⁸ Miller's article was originally published on the Democracy Project.

⁶⁹ Geoffrey Miller, "Ardern Continues to Forge a More US-Friendly Foreign Policy," *Stuff*, 4/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/300579683/ardern-continues-to-forge-a-more-usfriendly-foreign-policy>.

⁷⁰ Bryce Edwards, "Bryce Edwards: The Problem of 'Blindly Following' the US against China," *The New Zealand Herald*, 9/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/bryce-edwards-the-problem-of-blindly-following-the-us-against-china/2YS5MBE6Q5EBB2BP75DLRETAU/>.

⁷¹ Claire Trevett, "Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to Meet US President Joe Biden at White House: What to Expect," *The New Zealand Herald*, 30/5/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/prime-minister-jacinda-ardern-to-meet-us-president-joe-biden-at-white-house-what-to-expect/MFTLEU5UMHR3SKCSNPO5PRQTUU/>.

New Zealand's joining of the Indo-Pacific Framework (IPEF) was also viewed as a move towards the United States and away from China.⁷² IPEF was described as an 'attempt to reclaim economic influence for the US in the Indo-Pacific region and to counter China's influence'⁷³ on the *New Zealand Herald* and 'a US strategy to push back on China's growing influence in the region' on *Stuff*.⁷⁴ Both outlets noted the New Zealand Government's desire for greater economic engagement with the United States.⁷⁵

Nuance and Criticism

Some emphasised the need for New Zealand to continue to actively tread a middle path on China. Former New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, in an interview published on the *New Zealand Herald* website,⁷⁶ highlighted the importance of Prime Minister Ardern 'add[ing] "nuance" to a delicate international balance that risked slipping into a binary west versus the rest mentality.'⁷⁷ In a similar vein, another former Prime Minister, John Key, emphasised in an interview with the *New Zealand Herald* the importance of New Zealand balancing its relationships with China and the United States,⁷⁸ arguing that 'New Zealand should walk a much more careful and nuanced path' than Australia, which was 'firmly in the US camp' and 'clearly opposed to China and its leadership'.⁷⁹

⁷² IPEF was viewed negatively on *Global Times*. For example, one article noted the former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's opinion that the United States wanted to 'use' (用) IPEF to 'isolate' (孤立) China. Mahathir was reported to have further stated, 'many countries realise that this is not an economic bloc but a real political one' (许多国家都认识到这不是个经济集团, 而是个真正的政治集团). Adding, 'this [participation in IPEF] is harmful to their own economic development' (这不利于它们自身的经济发展). See "We Must Coexist with China: Mahathir Blasts the US for Building 'Cliques' to Isolate China 我们必须与中国共存: 马哈蒂尔狠批美建“小团体”孤立中国," *Global Times*, 28/5/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48BmVzEUXY>.

⁷³ Trevett, "Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to Meet US President Joe Biden at White House: What to Expect."

⁷⁴ Christine Rovoi, "Pushback on China: US Adds Fiji to Its Indo-Pacific Economic Strategy," *Stuff*, 1/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/world/south-pacific/300603160/pushback-on-china-us-adds-fiji-to-its-indopacific-economic-strategy>.

⁷⁵ Claire Trevett, "Jacinda Ardern Finds Ally in Search for Pacific Trade Deal on US Trip," *The New Zealand Herald*, 24/5/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/jacinda-ardern-finds-ally-in-search-for-pacific-trade-deal-on-us-trip/44AWOZ54H3BLD4KXX3TGPSBDDM/>; Glenn McConnell, "Climate Change and Ukraine on the Agenda for Jacinda Ardern's Trip to the US," *Stuff*, 2/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300577690/climate-change-and-ukraine-on-the-agenda-for-jacinda-arderns-trip-to-the-us>.

⁷⁶ The article was originally published on the *Spinoff*.

⁷⁷ Toby Manhire, "The Spinoff: Helen Clark on Jacinda Ardern at the White House – How It Works and Why It Matters Now," *The New Zealand Herald*, 31/5/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/the-spinoff-helen-clark-on-jacinda-ardern-at-the-white-house-how-it-works-and-why-it-matters-now/S3BLFTGDUCFMZKUH7Z7AV3SJ4/>.

⁷⁸ Key observed that 'managing the balance of the relationship with the US and the relationship with China was more challenging now' than when he was Prime Minister, between 2008 and 2016.

⁷⁹ Claire Trevett, "Sir John Key on White House Visits, Obama, Biden and Balancing US, China Relationships," *The New Zealand Herald*, 22/05/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/sir-john-key-on-white-house-visits-barack-obama-us-president-joe-biden-and-whether-nz-will-have-to-take-a-side-between-us-and-china/WTWXJACLUOLNGAG62OKKDTUUM4/#>.

A *New Zealand Herald* editorial, citing ‘Russia’s invasion of Ukraine’, the ‘fallout between China and Australia’, ‘the introduction of Aukus, and Beijing’s security pact with the Solomons’, observed that the ‘geopolitical outlook’ has changed in the past two years. This, it asserted, ‘has resulted in New Zealand noticeably working closer with traditional allies.’⁸⁰ The editorial noted that ‘there is still value in’ New Zealand ‘treading a more careful, independent path on China than Australia does.’ It added, ‘[l]ong-term scenarios can be prepared for but regular trade contact and political engagement are the best ways to keep the peace.’⁸¹

Matt Robson, a former New Zealand Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control and Associate Foreign Minister, was highly critical of New Zealand’s realignment. He wrote on *Stuff*, ‘New Zealand has been drawn into that game plan as part of the ring of countries, either nuclear-armed or under the protection of nuclear armed [*sic*] countries, that the United States is thrusting in the face of China. New Zealand, he asserted, should return to an ‘independent foreign policy’.⁸² John Tamihere too, in a *New Zealand Herald* piece, argued that New Zealand needs to be more independent when it comes to its engagement with China, stating that, ‘[i]t is about time we shaped our own foreign policy rather than being dragged along by others.’⁸³

People’s Daily Online and Global Times

In contrast to the New Zealand outlets, *People’s Daily Online* and *Global Times* tended to focus on the strengths of China’s relationship with New Zealand. At times, New Zealand’s positions on China were contrasted with the perceived hostility of other Western countries.

Positive Relations

People’s Daily Online and *Global Times* articles that had New Zealand-China relations as their primary focus were rare. One which did, however, was a report, published on both *People’s Daily Online* and *Global Times*, of a video meeting between Wang Yi and Nanaia

⁸⁰ The article asserted that this was most prominently the case when it came to responding to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

⁸¹ "Editorial: Even with Lean to US, NZ Should Keep Good Ties with China," *The New Zealand Herald*, 7/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/editorial-even-with-lean-to-us-nz-should-keep-good-ties-with-china/XW6FDJX5HYSMOJUJYMT7NPE7IGM/>.

⁸² Matt Robson, "Sleepwalking to War: NZ Is Back under the Nuclear Umbrella " *Stuff*, 12/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/300564314/sleepwalking-to-war-nz-is-back-under-the-nuclear-umbrella>.

⁸³ Tamihere, "John Tamihere: China Has Every Right to Korero with Our Pacific Brothers and Sisters and Not Be Sneered At."

Mahuta.⁸⁴ According to the report, ‘Wang Yi said that China has always regarded New Zealand as an important strategic partner. We are willing to work with New Zealand to earnestly implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of our two countries. Both sides should implement the China-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement Upgrade Protocol, utilise China-New Zealand ministerial-level dialogue on climate change and accelerate the green recovery’ (王毅表示, 中国始终把新西兰视为重要战略合作伙伴。愿同新方认真落实两国领导人达成的重要共识。双方要实施好中新自贸协定升级议定书, 用好中新气候变化部长级对话, 加快实现绿色复苏)。Mahuta was reported to have said, in addition to the comments noted earlier about the Pacific,⁸⁵ ‘New Zealand is willing to work together with China on global development and security’ (新方愿同中方一道就全球发展和安全作出共同努力)。⁸⁶

On *Global Times*, New Zealand’s relationship with China was occasionally contrasted positively with Australia’s. An editorial critical of Australia’s treatment of China did this most clearly, stating that ‘even New Zealand, Australia’s neighbour, which also has China as its largest trading partner, has advised Australia that it should show respect to China. Australia and New Zealand inhabit the same geographic environment and have similar political systems, so one can see that Canberra’s so-called “China threat” and “economic coercion” do not stand up to any scrutiny’ (连澳大利亚的邻国且同样以中国为最大贸易伙伴的新西兰也曾奉劝澳方, 应对中国展示尊重。澳大利亚和新西兰身处相同的地缘环境, 有着类似的政治制度, 足见堪培拉所谓的“中国威胁”“经济胁迫”都是完全经不起推敲的)。⁸⁷

Another example of New Zealand’s relative amenability came from a *Global Times* opinion piece by Chen Hong of East China Normal University. Chen noted that despite ‘Australian anti-China forces’ (澳大利亚反华势力) trying to get the countries of the South Pacific to carry out a ‘diplomatic boycott’ (外交抵制) of the Beijing Winter Olympics, ‘even fellow “Five Eyes” member New Zealand’ (连同为“五眼联盟”成员的新西兰) was not taking part

⁸⁴ The article appears to have originated from Xinhua News Agency (新华社).

⁸⁵ ‘New Zealand and China should, through bilateral and multilateral platforms, support Pacific islands countries to overcome challenges’ (新中应通过双边和多边平台, 支持岛国克服挑战)

⁸⁶ “Wang Yi Holds Video Meeting with New Zealand Foreign Minister Mahuta 王毅同新西兰外长马胡塔举行视频会晤.”; “Wang Yi Holds Video Meeting with New Zealand Foreign Minister Mahuta 王毅同新西兰外长马胡塔举行视频会晤.” An article on *People’s Daily Online* that reported on a video meeting between Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, Li Zhanshu (栗战书) and the then Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives, Trevor Mallard, was similarly positive about the relationship. See “Li Zhanshu Holds Talks with New Zealand Speaker Trevor Mallard 栗战书同新西兰议长马拉德举行会谈,” *People’s Daily Online*, 18/2/2022, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0218/c1024-32354375.html>.

⁸⁷ “Editorial: Hope That Canberra Can Regain Its ‘Rationality Towards China’ Soon 社评: 希望堪培拉早日找回“对华理性”, ” *Global Times*, 23/5/2022, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/487EsIZahG8>.

in the boycott. Chen stated that New Zealand was unable to send government representatives for reasons of ‘epidemic prevention and control’ (疫情防控).⁸⁸

An article published on *People’s Daily Online* similarly presented New Zealand’s stance on China as qualitatively different from the approaches of countries seen as more hostile to China – in this instance, the United States.⁸⁹ This piece used New Zealand as an example to highlight the claim that the United States’ “‘Indo-Pacific Strategy” is causing increasing international vigilance and concern, particularly among Asia-Pacific countries’ (“印太战略”引发国际上尤其是亚太各国越来越多的警惕和担忧). It noted that ‘according to a BBC report in April 2021, New Zealand Foreign Minister Mahuta stated that New Zealand is uncomfortable with the “Five Eyes” expanding its remit through pressuring China and that it still prefers to develop its bilateral relationship with China’ (据英国广播公司报道，2021年4月，新西兰外长马胡塔表示，新西兰对“五眼联盟”通过向中国施压扩大权限感到不舒服，仍然倾向于同中国发展双边关系).⁹⁰

Criticism

Despite some articles being positive about New Zealand’s stance towards China, it was also subject to criticism, particularly in the context of its involvement with NATO and the Five Eyes intelligence arrangement.

The most direct attention given to New Zealand’s engagement with NATO came in the form of a statement – a response to a speech made by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern at the Madrid NATO Summit in June - from the Chinese Embassy in New Zealand, published in full on *Global Times*. The statement held that Ardern’s speech had ‘contained some false accusations against China, claiming that China, “has become increasingly aggressive in recent years and more willing to challenge international rules and norms”’ (包含一些对中国的不实指责，声称中国“近年来越发咄咄逼人，更愿意挑战国际规则和规范”). It further noted that ‘New Zealand’s stance is clearly not conducive to the deepening of mutual trust between the two countries and runs counter to the efforts made by both countries to keep bilateral relations moving in the right direction’ (新方有关表态显然无助于深化两国互信，也有悖两国为保持双边关系正确发展方向而付出的努力).⁹¹

⁸⁸ Hong Chen, "Chen Hong: Inciting South Pacific Countries to ‘Boycott’ the Beijing Winter Olympics? Total Failure! 陈弘：煽动南太岛国“抵制”北京冬奥？完败！," *Global Times*, 29/1/2022, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/46bbRJcpwem>.

⁸⁹ The article originally came from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁹⁰ "Foreign Ministry Release: Falsehoods and Facts in US Perceptions of China 外交部发布：美国对华认知中的谬误和事实真相," *People’s Daily Online*, 20/6/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0620/c1002-32450962.html>.

⁹¹ Claims from Ardern about ‘increasing pressure’ (越来越大的压力) on the ‘rules-based international order’ (规则的国际秩序) in the South Pacific were also noted. In response, the statement asserted that ‘if there is

The statement also asserted China's opposition to NATO and reminded New Zealand that it had claimed that it would 'maintain an independent foreign policy and not seek to expand military alliances' (坚持独立外交政策, 不寻求扩大军事联盟). Ending more positively the statement, also pointed out the 'tremendous progress' (巨大进展) made in the relationship over the past 50 years, the resulting 'tangible benefits' (实实在在的好处) and China's continued willingness to work with New Zealand on the bilateral relationship.⁹²

In a *People's Daily Online* article, New Zealand's attendance at the NATO Summit, alongside other non-members Australia, South Korea and Japan, was viewed as part of a NATO attempt to expand into the Asia-Pacific region to suppress China. It stated, '[a]ccording to reports, NATO hopes to coordinate its position on Russia with these four countries and also wants to rope them to, together, suppress and encircle China' (据报道, 北约希望与这四国协调对俄立场, 还想拉拢四国共同打压围堵中国).⁹³

On *Global Times*, an editorial held that New Zealand (and Australia, Japan and South Korea) 'should not' (不该) attend the NATO Summit. It added, '[t]he interests of Asia-Pacific countries are based on the region's peace and stability; acquiescing to Asia-Pacificisation of NATO is no different to letting the wolf in, an extremely unwise choice for any Asia-Pacific country. Further, this will undoubtedly harm their strategic mutual trust with China and will inevitably come at a cost' (亚太国家利益建立在该地区的和平与稳定基础之上, 对北约亚太化的迎合无异于引狼入室, 对任何亚太国家来说都是极不明智的选择。而且, 这势必伤害与中国的战略互信, 不可避免地要付出代价).⁹⁴

indeed an escalation of tensions in the South Pacific, it has certainly not been brought about by the sustainable development cooperation between China and its island nation partners (如果说南太地区真的存在紧张升级的话, 那绝不是因为中国与岛国伙伴开展可持续发展合作造成的).

⁹² "Embassy Spokesperson in New Zealand Issues Statement on New Zealand's Speech at NATO Summit 驻新西兰使馆发言人就新方在北约峰会有关发言发表谈话," *Global Times*, 30/06/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48dKKniZg2m>. The Embassy statement was also the subject of a *Global Times* report that referred to Ardern's comments on China's behaviour as 'false accusations' (错误指责). Its focus was on the critical sections of the statement, however, and not the more conciliatory final paragraph. The article also cited a *Reuters* report, noting 'the report mentioned that recently, when talking about security issues and China's growing influence in the South Pacific, New Zealand's tone has hardened, partly because China and the Solomon Islands have signed a security cooperation framework agreement' (报道提到, 新西兰最近在谈及安全问题及中国在南太平洋地区影响力日益增长时, 语气变得强硬, 部分原因是中国和所罗门群岛签署了安全合作框架协议). See Miao Wang, "Chinese Embassy in New Zealand Responds to New Zealand's Groundless Accusations: Not Conducive to the Deepening of Mutual Trust 中国驻新西兰使馆回应新方无端指责: 无助于深化两国互信," *Global Times*, 30/6/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48dl76jUMkz>.

⁹³ Zhang Zhang, Yijming Fu, and Junwei Feng, "New Strategic Document Exposes Nato's Hawkish Character 新战略文件暴露北约好战本性," *People's Daily Online*, 1/7/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0701/c1002-32462988.html>.

⁹⁴ "Editorial: Asia-Pacific Countries Should Not Stand beneath Nato's Dangerous Wall 社评: 亚太国家不应站在北约的危墙之下," *Global Times*, 29/6/2022, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/48bxhRZ0Gu6>.

In another *Global Times* article, Li Haidong (李海东), a professor at China Foreign Affairs University's Institute of International Relations (外交学院国际关系研究所) was similarly unhappy with NATO's engagement with the four Asia-Pacific countries. He argued that NATO – 'a geopolitical weapon and tool' (地缘政治武器和工具) of the United States – is 'using the Ukraine issue to speed up the process of extending its tentacles into the Asia-Pacific region, accelerate the close cooperation between NATO and its Asia-Pacific allies, and gradually shift its focus from Europe to the Asia Pacific' (利用乌克兰问题, 加快北约触角伸向亚太的进程, 加快北约和亚太盟国的紧密合作, 将北约的关注点逐渐从欧洲向亚太区域转移).⁹⁵

An article published on the New Zealand news and current affairs website *Newsroom* was quoted on *Global Times*,⁹⁶ possibly to provide *Global Times* readers insight into how New Zealand media were covering New Zealand's engagement with NATO. Of Ardern's decision to attend the NATO summit, the *Newsroom* piece was reported to have said, 'New Zealand is too close to NATO' (新西兰离北约太近了), 'this will undermine New Zealand's nuclear-free status and its independent foreign policy' (这将损害新西兰的无核地位和独立外交政策). It added, 'New Zealand has consistently focused on peace-making, not war-making, however, what is troubling is that 35 years on from New Zealand becoming nuclear-free and leaving ANZUS, it is "once again under the United States' defence umbrella"' (新西兰一直专注于缔造和平而不是制造战争, 但令人不安的是, 在新西兰成为无核国家并退出美澳新安全条约 35 年后, 新西兰“再次回到美国的防御伞下”).⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Li contended that, in response, '[w]e cannot not harbour any illusions, we must concentrate on our own capacity building, and strengthening our strategic power - this is the foundation. Secondly, China must set about planning and advancing an Asia-Pacific security architecture' (我们不能抱任何幻想, 必须着眼于自身能力建设, 加强自身的战略力量, 这是基础。其次, 中国必须着手亚太区域安全架构的筹划和推进). See Jing Zhang and Xin Liu, "Tentacles Reaching into China's Neighbourhood? NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting Invites Japan and Korea to Attend for the First Time, Experts Call for Vigilance against the Globalisation of NATO 触角伸向中国周边? 北约外长会首次邀日韩参加, 专家提醒警惕北约全球化," *Global Times*, 7/4/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/47VCIBCbst5>.

⁹⁶ While not made explicit in the *Global Times* article, the *Newsroom* article was written by former Green Party MP. See Keith Locke, "New Zealand Getting Too Close to Nato," *Newsroom*, 23/6/2022, <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/new-zealand-getting-too-close-to-nato>.

⁹⁷ Qiao Da and Chen Yang, "What Are the Leaders of Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand Going to NATO to Say? Foreign Media Are Speculating 日韩澳新领导人赴北约说什么? 外媒纷纷猜测," *Global Times*, 23/6/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48Xwqlb3uvb>.

New Zealand was also mentioned in a *Global Times* editorial about the Five Eyes and their ‘attacks’ (攻击) on China.⁹⁸ The editorial remarked that “the Five Eyes”⁹⁹ has become a “gangster clique” with clear racist overtones. Its hostility towards, and apprehension about, China comes from deep-rooted white supremacist and racist values. It just isn’t willing to see the lives of the Chinese people improve” (“五眼联盟”已经成了带有明显种族主义色彩的“黑帮集团”。它的对华敌意和焦虑来自于根深蒂固的白人至上主义和种族歧视的价值观，就是不愿意看到中国人民日子越来越好). Observing the ties between the United States and the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, Australia and Canada’s membership of the Commonwealth, the article further stated, ‘the core bond that ties this alliance together comes from the time of British colonisation of North America and Oceania and the subsequently formed sense of superiority about Anglo-Saxon culture’ (系这一联盟最核心的纽带来自于当初英国对北美和大洋洲的殖民，以及随之形成的对盎格鲁-撒克逊文明的优越感).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ New Zealand was also listed among countries participating in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC). The exercise was viewed as hostile to China. See Zi Lu, "Line up of the World’s Largest Naval Exercise Revealed 全球最大海军演习阵容曝光," *Global Times*, 1/6/2022, <https://mil.huanqiu.com/article/48FiM6hi3CA>; Yifan Zhang and Yang Liu, "Global Times in-Depth: The US’ Rim of the Pacific Exercise Gives Off Three Major Dangerous Signals! 环时深度: 美国环太军演释放三大危险信号! ," *Global Times*, 6/6/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/48JqsaVyU2B>.

⁹⁹ The editorial asserted that while there are five countries involved, ‘in reality, it is mainly the ‘other four eyes’ relying on and taking orders from the one United States “eye”’ (实际主要是其他“四眼”依赖并听命于美国“一眼”).

¹⁰⁰ "Editorial: Spreading Rumours About China’s ‘Political Infiltration’; Are the ‘Five Eyes’ More Than Dim-Sighted? 社评: 造谣中国“政治渗透”, “五眼”何止昏花? ," *Global Times*, 20/6/2022, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/48UPQ8RhCsd>.

On New Zealand-China

Stuff and the New Zealand Herald

The complicated nature of New Zealand's trade relationship with China featured prominently in the New Zealand outlets' coverage. There was frequent acknowledgement of the economic benefits that trade with China had brought New Zealand, particularly since the signing of the New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2008 - described in one article as one of New Zealand's 'great foreign policy coups'¹⁰¹ and 'the most successful trade agreement in our history' in another.¹⁰² However, mention of trade was often accompanied by concerns that New Zealand businesses had been so successful in their trade with China that the country's economy had become dangerously over-reliant on the Chinese market.

Over-reliance and Economic Coercion

On *Stuff*, Michael Every, a global strategist for Rabobank, was quoted as saying that 'the trade exposure New Zealand has to China has always been an Achilles heel.' He added, '[y]ear after year no one has strategically addressed it. The argument has been that it will be OK, as it is too difficult to think about it not being OK.'¹⁰³ Similarly, and also on *Stuff*, Kiwibank Chief Executive, Steve Jurkovich, observed that '[i]t is always a problem for so much of your revenue to be dependent on one customer, regardless if you are a big or small business. China has grown so large as a customer that many New Zealand businesses are subject to how they feel.'¹⁰⁴

The latter point, of New Zealand's reliance on China as an export market leaving local businesses vulnerable to retaliatory moves by China if it became sufficiently displeased with New Zealand, was frequently mentioned, particularly in the context of New Zealand attempting to recalibrate its relationships with China and the United States.

In an opinion piece on *Stuff*, geopolitical analyst Geoffrey Miller wrote of Prime Minister Ardern's choice of language in a speech made to a United States business summit in which

¹⁰¹ Dileepa Fonseka, "Hello World, Buy Our Stuff! But Is NZ Truly Open for Business?," *Stuff*, 27/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/128451833/hello-world-buy-our-stuff-but-is-nz-truly-open-for-business>.

¹⁰² Tamihere, "John Tamihere: China Has Every Right to Korero with Our Pacific Brothers and Sisters and Not Be Sneered At."

¹⁰³ Gerhard Uys, "Geopolitics Is Exposing New Zealand's Agriculture Trade Risk to Secondary Sanctions," *Stuff*, 25/3/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/128141541/geopolitics-is-exposing-new-zealands-agriculture-trade-risk-to-secondary-sanctions>.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Smith, "Tight Labour Market Leaves Businesses Preparing for a Tough Few Years," *Stuff*, 26/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/the-monitor/128837914/tight-labour-market-leaves-businesses-preparing-for-a-tough-few-years>.

the ‘underlying theme’ of the address was Ardern ‘slowly but surely shifting New Zealand’s foreign policy towards the West.’ Miller noted that ‘some of the hardest-hitting passages [...] appeared deliberately indirect and oblique.’ Adding that, ‘Ardern’s indirectness and obliqueness was not without good reason and she would be fully aware of the sensitivities. With a third of New Zealand’s exports heading to China every year, Wellington can ill afford to get offside with Beijing.’¹⁰⁵

In a *New Zealand Herald* article, *Newstalk ZB* Chief Political Reporter, Jason Walls, asserted that ‘New Zealand can be critical of China, but only to a point.’ ‘If the Chinese government is upset enough, they could slap some tariffs on our products. And that could devastate a small country like New Zealand.’ He further added, ‘[i]f we were to turn off the tap to China it wouldn't really hurt their economy all that much, but it would devastate ours. Of course, the Chinese know this and they're not as forgiving as other countries when it comes to the diplomatic route on things.’¹⁰⁶ Following the release of a joint statement between New Zealand and the United States, journalist Heather du Plessis-Allan wrote on the *New Zealand Herald*, ‘[t]hat China told us off publicly is nothing new. China often does that. But this week's threat looked to some like a threat to punish us economically.’ A move ‘[t]hat would be a disaster’.¹⁰⁷

Claire Trevett, of the *New Zealand Herald*, held that New Zealand’s stance on China is shifting to resemble more closely the United States’, a move, she observed, that carries the risk of angering China and triggering retaliation. Noting that it was ‘ominous’ that both New Zealand’s Prime Minister and Trade Minister had warned ‘that export businesses needed to have a Plan B and possibly even a Plan C,’ Trevett further added that ‘[i]t is not a new suggestion. There has long been concern New Zealand is too reliant on China and needs to diversify export markets more. But there appears to be more urgency to the message now.’¹⁰⁸ The push to diversify New Zealand’s export markets was also remarked upon on *Stuff* with Henry Cooke observing, ‘both politicians and businesspeople [are] keen to make sure we are

¹⁰⁵ Miller, "Ardern Continues to Forge a More US-Friendly Foreign Policy."

¹⁰⁶ Damien Venuto, "The Front Page: NZ Walking Diplomatic Tightrope with China in the Pacific," *The New Zealand Herald*, 2/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/the-front-page-nz-walking-diplomatic-tightrope-with-china-in-the-pacific/JNBM55ANF23FMSJ4GB62RV6BJM/>.

¹⁰⁷ du Plessis-Allan, "Heather du Plessis-Allan: Is the Foreign Affairs Role Too Much for Nanaia Mahuta?."

¹⁰⁸ Claire Trevett, "Claire Trevett: PM Jacinda Ardern Made Most of US Trip, but Is China Tipping Point Close?," *The New Zealand Herald*, 4/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/claire-trevett-pm-jacinda-ardern-made-most-of-us-trip-but-is-china-tipping-point-close/YOH6Y65TY24TUSJBOLVSDXH2IE/>.

Trevett made a similar point in another article in which she noted that the government ‘is trying to open more markets for New Zealand exporters’ and ‘putting exporters on warning to at least have a Plan B in case China retaliates with measures that effectively block trade.’ See Trevett, "Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to Meet US President Joe Biden at White House: What to Expect."

not quite so economically reliant on a country that is not a democracy and is increasingly assertive in our neighbourhood.’¹⁰⁹

In a column published on the *New Zealand Herald* website,¹¹⁰ Vaughan Gunson wrote of New Zealand’s ‘increasingly close relationship’ with NATO and its ‘N[ATO]-aligned statements against China.’ He argued that such actions are ‘curious because of the not-insignificant detail of \$20 billion worth of trade with China.’ He further observed that ‘[t]he Government is provoking the displeasure of China’s rulers with the stronger diplomatic language’ and that New Zealand companies ‘with a big interest in having continued access to the Chinese market might be nervous of NZ-China diplomatic relations going south.’¹¹¹

Concerns about trade retaliation from China also extended to the extradition case of a New Zealand resident, Kim Kyung-yup, accused of murder in Shanghai. A *Stuff* article noted that the decision on whether to extradite Kim would be made by Minister of Justice, Kris Faafoi, stating ‘with China, everything is political. Fully one-third of New Zealand’s trade is with China, and some human rights advocates are concerned that New Zealand might be influenced by wanting to keep in China’s good books’ by approving the extradition. Adding, ‘[a]fter all, China has been known to retaliate economically in extradition cases.’¹¹²

Other Economic Risks

Overreliance on China was seen as carrying risks that extended beyond deliberate action by China to hurt New Zealand’s economy. An article on *Stuff* quoted an International Monetary Fund report which stated, ‘[s]lower growth in China could have a significant impact on New Zealand’s economy given China’s importance as a trading partner.’¹¹³ In other *Stuff* articles, an economic slowdown in China was identified as one of ‘the five big foreign policy challenges for New Zealand in 2022’,¹¹⁴ and the damage that a ‘systemic China-wide default’

¹⁰⁹ Cooke, "In a Tense and Changing World, Jacinda Ardern's Asia Trip Was Worth It."

¹¹⁰ Gunson is a columnist for the *Northern Advocate*, the outlet for that the column appears to have originally been written for.

¹¹¹ Vaughan Gunson, "Vaughan Gunson: Let's Pursue a Truly Independent Foreign Policy," *The New Zealand Herald*, 15/6/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-advocate/news/vaughan-gunson-lets-pursue-a-truly-independent-foreign-policy/7VNYOO4M54L6HQRRL4ONJU46IM/>.

¹¹² "Explainer: Concern About China's Efforts to Extradite a NZ Resident," *Stuff*, 10/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/explained/128511929/explainer-concern-about-chinas-efforts-to-extradite-a-nz-resident>.

¹¹³ Susan Edmunds, "IMF Sounds Housing Market Warning as High Debt Levels Meet Rising Interest Rates," *Stuff*, 24/3/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/300548792/imf-sounds-housing-market-warning-as-high-debt-levels-meet-rising-interest-rates>.

¹¹⁴ Lucy Craymer, "The Five Big Foreign Policy Challenges for New Zealand in 2022," *Stuff*, 1/1/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300479493/the-five-big-foreign-policy-challenges-for-new-zealand-in-2022>.

on Local Government Financing Vehicles could cause to New Zealand's economy was considered.¹¹⁵

China's zero-Covid policy was also seen as problematic for New Zealand businesses. A *New Zealand Herald* article reported, '[a]s was the case at the start of the pandemic just over two years ago, demand for New Zealand lobster has been halted given different lockdown restrictions in place in China.'¹¹⁶ Another noted that '[t]he supply chain headache for NZ Inc is about to get extra painful, with hard Covid lockdowns in China likely to prompt shipping lines to cut out ports there and possible cancellation of some air freight services to this country.'¹¹⁷ *Stuff* reported that lockdowns in China were 'identified as a key factor' in a fall in milk prices¹¹⁸ and the lower consumption of New Zealand beef and lamb in Beijing and Shanghai.¹¹⁹ The negative impacts of China's Covid-19 responses were, however, largely presented as 'short-term' issues on both *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald*.¹²⁰

People's Daily Online and Global Times

In the Chinese news outlets, the narratives that surrounded the New Zealand-China trade relationship were highly positive and significantly different to those that predominated in the New Zealand news outlets' coverage. Strong bilateral trade was celebrated and there was no mention of New Zealand being over-reliant on China. *People's Daily Online* gave far more attention to the trade relationship between New Zealand and China than *Global Times* did.

¹¹⁵ Damien Grant, "We Kiwis Are a Content Lot, but Trouble Looms over the Horizon," *Stuff*, 16/1/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/300496211/we-kiwis-are-a-content-lot-but-trouble-looms-over-the-horizons>.

¹¹⁶ Logan Savory, "China's Lockdown Restrictions Again Hit Lobster Industry Hard," 22/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/128435734/chinas-lockdown-restrictions-again-hit-lobster-industry-hard>.

¹¹⁷ Andrea Fox, "Covid-19: NZ Supply Chain Pressures to Get Worse Due to China Lockdowns, Shanghai Port Delays," *The New Zealand Herald*, 20/4/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/covid-19-nz-supply-chain-pressures-to-get-worse-due-to-china-lockdowns-shanghai-port-delays/E727JPTCG4MAKHVOT7QYLCU3YE/>.

¹¹⁸ Logan Savory, "Global Dairy Trade Milk Prices Dip Again, Farmers Remain Hopeful It's Temporary," *Stuff*, 21/4/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/128420781/global-dairy-trade-milk-prices-dip-again-farmers-remain-hopeful-its-temporary>.

¹¹⁹ Gerhard Uys, "Future of Beef and Lamb Markets Remain Volatile, but Exports Earning Up," *Stuff*, 10/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/agribusiness/128560599/future-of-beef-and-lamb-markets-remain-volatile-but-exports-earning-up>.

¹²⁰ Blair Jackson, "Chinese Lockdowns Stifling Trade Could Ease in Two Months, Lobster Chief Executive Says," *Stuff*, 5/5/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/aquaculture/128557000/chinese-lockdowns-stifling-trade-could-ease-in-two-months-lobster-chief-executive-says>; "What China's Lockdowns Mean for NZ Agribusiness as Fonterra Trims Forecast," *The New Zealand Herald*, 8/5/2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/what-chinas-lockdowns-mean-for-nz-agribusiness-as-fonterra-trims-forecast/HV62BV5OI3MNZWCMTSG5VFJWJE/>.

Free Trade Agreement Benefits

An important component of this positivity was the New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Upgrade, which was signed in January 2021 and entered into force in April 2022.¹²¹ A *People's Daily Online* article on the upgrade stated that it 'is a high-standard FTA in line with modern international economic and trade rules [...] and is conducive to realising greater quality and efficiency in bilateral cooperation between China and New Zealand' (是符合现代国际经贸规则的高水平自贸协议[...]有利于实现中新双边合作进一步提质增效). It was said to be 'a new model' (新典范) for 'economic cooperation' (经济合作) between China and Western countries.¹²² Another article on *People's Daily Online* carried the views of 'people from China and New Zealand' (中新两国人士)¹²³ who expressed that 'measures such as new tariff reductions, customs clearance facilitation measures, and broader opening will bring greater convenience and tangible benefits to bilateral trade' (新的关税减免、通关便利措施、更大领域开放等将为两国贸易带来更多便利和实惠).¹²⁴

The upgrade was also featured in an article published on *People's Daily Online* that celebrated China's international engagement in the first three months of 2022.¹²⁵ The article cited an 'evaluation' (评价) that held, 'the entry into force of the upgrade protocol will further deepen China-New Zealand economic and trade cooperation. It will have a positive impact and a demonstrative effect that will promote a stable recovery of the global economy' (议定书生效将进一步深化中新两国经贸合作, 为促进全球经济稳定复苏发挥积极作用和示范效应).¹²⁶

People's Daily Online also covered the China-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement Upgrade and Economic and Trade Cooperation Symposium (中国—新西兰自由贸易协定升级及经贸合作座谈会) in Taishan. At the event, it reported, 'representatives from both countries actively exchanged views on enhancing cooperation, seizing new opportunities brought about

¹²¹ Damien O'Connor, "China FTA Upgrade Enters into Force in April," news release, 2022, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/china-fta-upgrade-enters-force-april>.

¹²² Pingfan Jia, "Upgrade of China-New Zealand FTA Is Good News for the World (Hot Topic Dialogue) 中新升级自贸协定是世界的福音 (热点对话)," *People's Daily Online*, 23/4/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0423/c1002-32406464.html>.

¹²³ Three New Zealand businesspeople, a former New Zealand ambassador to China and a Chinese diplomat.

¹²⁴ Lei Guo, "Round-Up: China-New Zealand FTA Upgrade Brings More Tangible Benefits to China-New Zealand Trade 综述: 中国-新西兰自贸协定升级给中新贸易带来更多实惠," *People's Daily Online*, 18/4/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0418/c1002-32401407.html>. The article was originally published on *Xinhua Net* (新华网).

¹²⁵ The article was originally published on *Xinhua Net*.

¹²⁶ Hua Liu et al., "Commentary: China Taking up Its Responsibilities in a Complex and Turbulent International Situation 述评: 在复杂动荡的国际局势中彰显中国担当," *People's Daily Online*, 10/4/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0410/c1002-32395341.html>.

by the China-New Zealand FTA Upgrade and achieving common development' (两国代表就增进合作、抓住中新自贸协定升级带来的新机遇、实现共同发展积极进行了交流).¹²⁷

Broader Positivity

A *People's Daily Online* article reported on how New Zealand businesspeople view the Chinese market and provided more general positivity about the trade relationship and China as an export destination.¹²⁸ It stated that 'several New Zealand companies have recently expressed in interviews with Xinhua News Agency that they are optimistic about the development potential of China's economy and will continue to deepen their commitments to the Chinese market' (多家新西兰企业近日在接受新华社记者采访时纷纷表示, 看好中国经济发展潜力, 将持续深耕中国市场). The article went on to cite representatives of Fonterra, Zespri and Fiordland Lobster Company discussing the importance of the Chinese market to their businesses.¹²⁹

New Zealand was also mentioned in the context of its membership of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a regional free trade agreement that New Zealand and China are both members of. An article, published by *People's Daily Online*, listed New Zealand as one of the countries in which RCEP had recently come into force. It stated, '[a]gainst the backdrop of an international situation which is, at present, complicated and volatile, RCEP coming into force and being implemented as scheduled fully reflects the confidence and determination of all parties concerned to jointly uphold multilateralism and free trade and promote regional economic integration. It will promote deep regional economic integration and free trade development and inject strong impetus into regional and global economic growth' (在当前国际形势复杂多变的背景下, RCEP如期生效实施, 充分体现了有关各方共同维护多边主义和自由贸易、促进区域经济一体化的信心和决心, 将促进区域经济深度融合与自由贸易发展, 为地区和全球经济增长注入强大动力).¹³⁰ New Zealand was also listed as a member state in several other *People's Daily Online* and *Global Times* articles about RCEP.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Xinyi Li, "China-New Zealand FTA Upgrade and Economic and Trade Cooperation Symposium Held 中国—新西兰自贸协定升级及经贸合作座谈会召开," *People's Daily Online*, 8/4/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0408/c1002-32394728.html>.

¹²⁸ The article was originally published on *Xinhua Net*.

¹²⁹ Lei Guo and Huizi Li, "New Zealand Businesses Continue to Be Optimistic About the Chinese Market 新西兰企业持续看好中国市场," *People's Daily Online*, 16/5/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0516/c1002-32422487.html>.

¹³⁰ Hui Liu, "The World's Largest Free Trade Area Is Officially Launched - Giving a Strong Impetus to Regional and Global Economic Growth 全球最大自由贸易区正式启航——为地区和全球经济增长注入强大动力," *People's Daily Online*, 3/1/2022, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0103/c1002-32322844.html>.

¹³¹ These include Xueming Gu, "RCEP Helps to Promote the High-Quality Development of the Chinese Economy RCEP有助于促进中国经济高质量发展," *People's Daily Online*, 4/1/2022, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0104/c1003-32323131.html>., Yugui Zhang, "RCEP Enters into Force:

On *Global Times*, China's influence over New Zealand's economy was briefly referred to in a translation, containing several changes and omissions, of a *Straits Times* article on China's influence in Singapore.¹³² The article noted that New Zealand ranked first in terms of China's 'economic influence' (经济影响力).¹³³ It didn't elaborate on the implications of that influence.¹³⁴ *Global Times* also translated part of a *Stuff* article about New Zealand tourism operators facing a summer without Chinese tourists.¹³⁵ It mentioned the importance of Chinese tourism to New Zealand and the general economic difficulties experienced by New Zealand's tourist industry during the Covid-19 pandemic but also the 'cautious optimism' (谨慎乐观) of a travel agent. One interviewee stated that she was targeting Chinese-Australian tourists to help fill the gap.¹³⁶

Injecting Stable Expectations into an Uncertain World Economy RCEP 生效：向不确定的世界经济注入稳定预期," *People's Daily Online*, 3/1/2022, <http://finance.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0103/c1004-32322986.html>., Jiaxin Yu et al., "RCEP Has Officially Come into Force! Take a Look at Four Highlights of the World's Largest Free Trade Area RCEP 正式生效！聚焦全球最大自贸区四大看点," *People's Daily Online*, 2/1/2022, <http://finance.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0102/c1004-32322642.html>. and Wenzheng Wang, "In the Past Six Months, the Dividends of RCEP Have Continued to Flow 这半年，RCEP 红利持续释放," *People's Daily Online*, 28/6/2022, <http://finance.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0628/c1004-32458425.html>; Jun'an Chen, "US Media: When It Comes to Trade with Southeast Asia, the US Is 'Chasing after' China 美媒：与东南亚贸易往来，美国“追赶”中国," *Global Times*, 21/1/2022, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/46V83QYCVHo>; "Foreign Ministry: China Is a Promoter of the Signing and Coming into Force of RCEP and Practitioner of Its High-Quality Implementation 外交部：中方是 RCEP 签署和生效实施的推动者 也是高质量实施 RCEP 的实践者," *Global Times*, 20/4/2022, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/47gS7ZXfmOH>.

¹³² Justin Ong, "S'pore Is Second Most Influenced by China in the World, According to Taiwan Report," *The Straits Times*, 4/5/2022, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/spore-is-second-most-influenced-by-china-in-the-world-according-to-taiwan-report>.

¹³³ The *Straits Times* article referred to the metric as 'China's economic leverage over policy or corporate behaviour' and it was accompanied by a mention of economically coercive behaviour towards Singaporean businesses. Economic coercion towards New Zealand businesses was not mentioned in the article.

¹³⁴ Ding Ding, "New Report: Three Countries Where China's Influence Is Greatest - Cambodia, Singapore and Thailand 新报告：最受中国影响国家前三名——柬埔寨、新加坡、泰国," *Global Times*, 28/4/2022, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/47mcnhe3QwW>.

¹³⁵ Amanda Cropp, "Tourism Cautiously Optimistic as Bookings Build, Despite Another Summer without the Chinese Visitors Who Once Dominated Overseas Arrivals," *Stuff*, 26/6/2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/the-monitor/128768913/tourism-cautiously-optimistic-as-bookings-build-despite-another-summer-without-the-chinese-visitors-who-once-dominated-overseas-arrivals>.

¹³⁶ Xiaodong Cui, "New Zealand Media: It's Another Summer without Chinese Tourists 新西兰媒体：又是一个没有中国游客的夏天," *Global Times*, 26/6/2022, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/48aZEAXAns1>.

Conclusion

News media play an important role in facilitating mutual understanding between countries. This report finds that in covering New Zealand-China relations, New Zealand and Chinese media traverse many of the same topics. However, while the topics may be broadly the same, the ways in which they are depicted often diverge significantly. At times, the narratives are so different that they bear very little resemblance to one another.

On *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald*, China's deepening engagement with the Pacific was frequently presented as a cause for concern. It challenged New Zealand's interests and necessitated a response. In the Chinese outlets, primarily *Global Times* which gave the issue the most attention, China's engagement with the Pacific was respectful, beneficial for the Pacific and of no threat to New Zealand. New Zealand's anxiety was presented as unreasonable, borne of a zero-sum view of the Pacific and strongly influenced by Australia and the United States. This overlapped with a less prominent narrative on *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald* which held that concern about China's involvement in the Pacific was unfair to China and paternalistic towards the Pacific countries involved.

The New Zealand outlets presented New Zealand as aligning its foreign policy more closely with the West. This was frequently portrayed as a deliberate and careful adjustment, made as New Zealand sought to manage an increasingly difficult relationship with China. Arguments against this recalibration were also covered. On the Chinese websites, New Zealand's relationship with China was seen as strong and, at times, its positions were contrasted favourably with the stances of countries seen as hostile to China. When engaging with NATO and the Five Eyes, New Zealand was seen as playing a role in United States-led initiatives to contain China. New Zealand's concerns about China's behaviour were not given meaningful consideration and its agency was obscured by a tendency to view New Zealand-China relations through the prism of China's relationships with the United States and Australia.

New Zealand's trade relationship with China was depicted on *Stuff* and the *New Zealand Herald* as having been so successful that New Zealand had become vulnerable to the capriciousness of a country with a history of using economic coercion in political disputes. Concerns were also held about the risks to New Zealand's economy posed by an economic slowdown in China and the negative impact of China's zero-Covid policies on New Zealand

businesses. On *People's Daily Online*, the New Zealand-China trade relationship was celebrated as mutually beneficial and, with the coming into force of the New Zealand-China FTA Upgrade, heading towards even greater heights. Neither *People's Daily Online* nor *Global Times*, which gave very little attention to New Zealand-China trade relations, mentioned New Zealand's concerns about economic over-dependence.

Given the propensity of individual countries to interpret issues in idiosyncratic ways and the differences between New Zealand's and China's political systems, and their attendant journalistic values and standards, these findings are not entirely surprising. They are, however, a concern. As New Zealand seeks to manage the complexities of its relationship with China, mutual understanding is critical. Stark discrepancies in how the bilateral relationship is depicted by New Zealand and Chinese media hinder this process by offering consumers of news in each country presentations of the bilateral relationship that are not only very different but sometimes incompatible with one another.

The New Zealand and Chinese media outlets included in this study are influential in their respective countries, however, the media landscapes in both countries extend far beyond them. Future studies of media reporting on coverage of New Zealand-China relations would benefit from exploring a wider range of media outlets and formats. In addition, attention should be directed at interpreting the news content of Chinese media outlets through the prism of their roles within China's party-state media system.

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