



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
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TE HERENGA WAKA

New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre

KŌMARU KURA



2023 Annual Report

THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEMPORARY CHINA RESEARCH CENTRE | KŌMARU KURA

Dec 2023

This report covers the activities of the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre (NZCCRC) in 2023.

2023 in review

2023 has been a busy year for the Centre. We returned to in-person academic exchanges and dialogues, published a report on Chinese language media in New Zealand, and had a full programme of seminars, lectures and public engagement. The China Capable Public Sector (CCPS) programme remains an important offering in which staff at the Centre design, prepare and run a busy series of masterclasses, knowledge transfer events, cross-agency forums, a new one-day MBE-specific course, and forums for senior leaders across the New Zealand public sector.

As part of our ongoing commitment to promoting international academic exchange we held a successful symposium in Wellington in August with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and visited China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) for academic dialogues with a number of institutions in Beijing and Shanghai in November and December. We joined the World China Studies Forum in Shanghai (organised by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) and the International Consortium for Contemporary China Studies meeting held in Sydney. We co-organised several successful roundtables with Chinese scholars, officials and New Zealand and Australian academics, as well as co-hosting a discussion of journalist Sam Sachdeva's book on New Zealand-China relations with the Centre for Strategic Studies.

China and New Zealand-China relations remained topical in 2023. Considerable questions were raised about China's economic and political circumstances post-Covid, and officials put forward ambitious plans to reform global governance. New Zealand sent a Prime Ministerial delegation to China in July, released a slew of government policy documents, and held a general election in New Zealand in October. This generated significant media attention. The Centre maintained a full programme of engagement with think tanks, research centres and officials. The Centre celebrated the coordinator, Andrew Wilford, receiving a distinction award for his MA thesis: 'Understanding the China—India Relationship: A Perceptual Analysis of Chinese Think-Tank Literature 2014—2021'.

We have a further research project planned for next year, visits to China for dialogue discussions, a full range of activities for the CCPS programme, and the revamping of the organisational structure and location of the Centre as part of the 2022 review implementation plan.

Activities of the Centre

Publications

[‘On the Record: An introduction to Aotearoa New Zealand’s Chinese Language Media’](#)

by Caleb Hoyle

This report offers an in-depth examination of the Chinese language media landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand, its history, challenges and its important place in New Zealand’s broader media environment. The report finds that “Chinese-language media are a profoundly important part of New Zealand’s information environment” but also raises questions around it meeting “the standards expected of media operating in liberal democracies”. It puts forward nine recommendations to “promote a greater understanding of New Zealand’s Chinese-language media, enhance their value and improve their quality”. The report is 68 pages long and includes a valuable appendix of notable active outlets in New Zealand.

Public Lecture

Renowned China commentator, journalist, author and Lowy Institute Senior Fellow, Richard McGregor, delivered a Public Lecture titled ‘China under Xi’ to an in-person group of 80 scholars, policymakers, diplomats, students and members of the public. The speech examined developments in China under the leadership of Xi Jinping and provided a comprehensive update of the new standing committee following the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Richard placed these changes in the context of Sino-US competition and introduced the key figures in the Chinese leadership. The talk was well-received, and the speaker met with various public servants, academics, politicians and members of the diplomatic corps during his visit to Wellington.

Symposiums

Strategic Outlook and Regional Development (17 August 2023)

Co-organised by the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre and the Bureau of International Cooperation at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). This seminar drew on the expertise of Victoria University of Wellington to discuss geopolitics, China’s role in the Pacific and climate change policy. Rebecca Needham, Professor Xiaoming Huang, Associate Professor Jason Young, Dr Alex Lo, Professor Jon Fraenkel and Dr Iati Iati presented and engaged in discussion with CASS scholars from the Institute of World Economics and Politics, the National Institute of International Strategy and The Research Institute for Eco-Civilisation. It was great to welcome CASS scholars back to New Zealand after four years of absence.

The discussion focussed on:

1. Challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation;
2. The strategic outlook;
3. Regional Development in the South Pacific;

4. China's approach to climate change and climate change governance.

We also co-hosted a seminar panel discussion of journalist Sam Sachdeva's book '**the China Tightrope**' with the Centre for Strategic Studies (21 June).

Global China Seminar Series

The long-running Global China Seminar series is an academic seminar series held monthly on an aspect of China Studies. This year we have hosted seven high-quality speakers from across New Zealand and Australia. Attendance remains strong at all seminars with audiences ranging from 20 to 60 academics, policymakers, media, students, and interested public. The Global China seminars serve as a platform for the dissemination of new research from academics at member universities and facilitate greater exchange between scholars and policymakers. This year's speakers included:

1. Associate Professor Nicholas Khoo (Associate Professor of International Relations, University of Otago) '*China's Multipolarity Discourse and US-China Rivalry.*'
2. Professor Natasha Hamilton Hart (School of Business and Management, University of Auckland) '*Southeast Asia between China and the United States.*'
3. Professor Xiaoming Huang (School of Politics and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington) '*China and the Liberal International Order (1978-2018).*'
4. Associate Professor Hongzhi Gao (School of Business and Marketing, Victoria University of Wellington) '*How does US-China decoupling impact business businesses in third markets? Corporate responses in the semiconductor industry.*'
5. Dr. Antonina Luszczkiewicz & Dr. Patrick Mendis '*The Water Issue in China-India Relations and Its Impact on the US Indo-Pacific Strategy.*'
6. Dr Darren Lim (Australia National University) '*State vs Market Tensions in Australian Economic Statecraft.*'
7. Dr Peter Harris (NZCCRC Senior Fellow) '*Looking South: imperial China's view of a leading regional neighbour.*'

Roundtables

1. The Centre hosted a roundtable discussion on Cross-Strait Relations with Associate Professor Max Lin (Tunghai University).
2. Roundtable with the Chinese Association for Peace and Disarmament in advance of the PM's visit to China in June.
3. Representatives from the New Zealand Centre at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences called on the Centre to discuss academic exchange and to reconnect after the pandemic. A second delegation from SASS visited in October to discuss research connections between the NZCCRC and the SAAS Institute of International Studies.
4. The Director met with the International Liaison department of the CCP for an online discussion on the bilateral relationship in the new era.

5. The Centre held a roundtable with the Institute of World Economics and Politics from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences on bilateral relations and the regional outlook.
6. The Centre hosted representatives from the Chinese Embassy for a discussion of New Zealand-China relations and regional affairs.
7. The Centre hosted Professor Sue Trevaskes of Griffith University for a roundtable on Ideology and the Governance of the CCP.

China Capable Public Sector (CCPS)

The Centre has continued to work closely with the CCPS programme to deliver quality programmes on China for the New Zealand public sector. In 2023 we have delivered 21 events with the CCPS programme, including:

- Three five-day Masterclasses on China.
- Two one-day MFAT exclusive workshops for MFAT employees to increase their knowledge and understanding of China.
- A single one-day MBIE exclusive workshop that addressed China's political economy, tourism policy, regulatory approach and governance.
- Two day-long forums for tiers 1-3 Senior leaders held in Auckland and Wellington
- Ten Knowledge Transfer events.
- Three Cross-Agency Forums for Masterclass Alumni

The Centre will continue to deliver the CCPS programme into 2024, with work already underway for the first four KT speakers and the April Masterclass.

Other Activities

The Centre celebrated the coordinator, Andrew Wilford, receiving a distinction award for his MA thesis: 'Understanding the China—India Relationship: A Perceptual Analysis of Chinese Think-Tank Literature 2014—2021'. This was an excellent achievement and a fitting award for a great piece of research by an integral member of the Centre's team.

The Centre continued to provide comment for New Zealand and international media (print, online, television and radio) as well as maintaining a social media presence through its Twitter account and regular op-eds for domestic and international media and think tanks. Aside from the Chinese Embassy, the Centre has held discussions this year with diplomats from Australia, the EU, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

As part of our ongoing commitment to promoting international academic exchange, we led a delegation to Beijing and Shanghai to visit China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) for academic dialogues in November and December. We had fruitful discussions with CICIR, China Institutes of International Studies (CIIS) and Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS) across a range of topics over a week-long visit. This was the first visit we have led to China since 2019. It was great to reconnect with partner institutions and to have in-person discussions in China.

We joined the World China Studies Forum in Shanghai (organised by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) and the International Consortium for Contemporary China Studies meeting held in Sydney. It was great to have the opportunity to engage with a range of China studies experts and centres from around the world.

A View to the Future

Considering the importance of New Zealand's economic and political relationship with China, the significant people-to-people links and the strained geopolitical environment, there has never been more of a need for New Zealand-inflected research on China. The Centre will its contribution to the New Zealand academic and public debate, as well as internationally, through research, teaching and engagement, with the goal of strengthening the field through long-term sustainable development.

I wish to acknowledge the continued support and encouragement that the Centre receives from Victoria University of Wellington and Sarah Leggott, and as always, I welcome input and feedback from the Advisory Board.

Jason Young
NZCCRC Director
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