

New Zealand's Pacific Reset: Buzzword or Bipartisan Policy?

Pacific Update
5 July 2018

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“The Pacific is where New Zealand matters more, wields more influence, and can have a more positive impact.”

Winston Peters, Deputy Foreign Minister and
Foreign Affairs Minister, 2 March 2018

The Reset Policy Context

- Long-standing assumptions about New Zealand's relationships with Pacific Island states including assumptions about influence and access
- New Zealand's diminished strategic relevance in the Pacific Islands
- Wider geopolitical anxiety about challenges to the international rules-based order and the increasingly complex and contested security environment
- A values-based foreign policy launched by the Labour-led coalition government
- Understanding that New Zealand needed to rethink its place and partnerships in the Pacific and do better
- Pasifika as a robust and influential constituency within New Zealand politics and society

Key Drivers of the Reset

- New Zealand as a Pacific nation underpinned by the question “What is New Zealand’s place in the world?” From international currency to regional reality
- New Zealand’s national security – from climate to crime
- Shared prosperity: “We want to be clear though –the reset is not about trying to control Pacific countries economically or politically. Instead, this reset is about working with our Pacific family to be independent and self-sufficient.” (Peters, Otago Foreign Policy School, 29 June 2018)
- Complex and contested security environment: “Our eyes are wide open to New Zealand’s decreasing influence in the Pacific.” (Peters, Otago Foreign Policy School, 29 June 2018)

Key Risks and Challenges to the Reset

- The Reset requires a mind reset about how New Zealand engages with Pacific Island partners starting with: where have we been going wrong and how do we do better?
- Avoiding the business-as-usual trap. Political will is strong but will the institutions and bureaucracies support the challenge that a genuine reset will bring to bear on practices, policies, and attitudes?
- How to convert buzzwords into bipartisan policy which successive governments integrate into every day practice?
- The Reset isn't occurring within a policy or geopolitical vacuum? How will issues of discord and dissonance with partners influence it?
- Does the Reset reflect Pacific priorities and aspirations? Does it have buy in?

THANK YOU!