



Perspectives of Two Island Nations: Singapore and New Zealand

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Editor

July 2024

Synopsis

In this contribution, the editor provides a brief introduction to her book “Perspectives of Two Island Nations: Singapore and New Zealand”.

Singapore and New Zealand are island nations that share numerous similarities and have enjoyed close relations for almost sixty years. Both face significant global challenges in today's less stable world. Twenty-seven prominent experts provide in-depth analysis of a wide range of topics, including Singapore's and New Zealand's respective history, foreign policy, trade relations, economics, sustainability and climate policies, as well as creative sectors, museums and ageing populations. Other distinguished authors highlight the close cooperation in defence, trade and business.

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The Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) is a private institute for research and consultancy. The ISPSW is an objective, task-oriented and politically non-partisan institute.

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Introduction

Singapore and New Zealand have much in common. They are small countries with populations of just over five million. Both countries are former British colonies and young nations. New Zealand gained full independence in 1947, and Singapore became independent in 1965. New Zealand was one of the first countries to officially recognise Singapore when it became independent. They share a long history of close cooperation in politics, defence, trade and business.

Both countries are strong supporters of multilateral frameworks and the rule of law. Both face similar global challenges arising from overlapping international crises and from climate change. Singapore and New Zealand are both navigating an increasingly contested Indo-Pacific region while maintaining good relations with the two major powers, the United States and China. As small and open economies they rely heavily on trade and share similar views on trade issues.

However, the two nations have developed at different speeds and in different ways. New Zealand has a resource and agriculture-based economy. It faces the challenge of geographical remoteness from major Asian markets. Singapore, on the other hand, is a prosperous city-state situated along one of the world's busiest shipping and trading routes. It has become a major financial hub with a focus on advanced technology and high-end science research. In 2022, Singapore's GDP per capita was appr. US\$ 82,800 compared to New Zealand's US\$ 48,400 (World Bank). Both countries have implemented tax and other incentives to attract foreign direct investment from around the world.

As Editor, I selected the topics and the contributors to the book. The result: A compilation of 25 essays with 27 prominent experts from Singapore and New Zealand who cover a wide range of topics in each country. The book is divided into eight sections: History and Outlook; Foreign Policy in a Changing Environment; Bilateral Defence and Strategic Relations; Singapore and New Zealand: Trade Cooperation; Economic Challenges and Business Cooperation; Climate Change, Environment and Sustainable Policies as well as the Creative Sectors and Ageing Societies.

Having worked in both countries as a German diplomat, I met many of the authors of this volume. As a result, I compiled and edited this volume. The book is divided into eight sections: history and outlook; foreign policy in a changing environment; bilateral defence and strategic relations; trade cooperation; economic challenges and business cooperation; climate change, environment and sustainable policies as well as the creative sectors and ageing societies.

The book attempts to trace each country's approach to important questions of our time. Some essays focus on how two small states manage the challenges and opportunities of globalisation. Others highlight similarities and differences between the two countries, and their cooperation in defence, trade and business. The book also shows ways in which the two countries can learn from one another.

The book has outstanding contributors:

I am grateful to both Singapore's Emeritus Senior Minister **Goh Chok Tong** who supplied a *Message* to the book and to former Prime Minister of New Zealand, **Helen Clark**, wrote a *Foreword*.

Eminent Singapore historian **Prof. Tan Tai Yong** gives a most concise overview of Singapore's history: "From Colony to Global City-State". **Peter Carter**, a specialist in New Zealand's political history, presents a historical



overview of diplomatic relations between New Zealand and Singapore from the 1950s to 1970, in the context of the emergence of both countries as independent states. **Christopher Finlayson**, former New Zealand Attorney-General and Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations, analyses the New Zealand Government's attempts over the last 50 years to address long-standing grievances between Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and the state.

In the section on *Foreign Policy*, Singapore's prominent **Ambassador Prof. Tommy Koh** outlines the many foreign policy challenges Singapore is facing at the moment. **Prof. Nicholas Khoo**, one of the top New Zealand foreign policy experts, analyses the challenges faced by New Zealand's foreign policy between 2017 and 2023 and discusses the country's response to various issues, including nuclear weapons, the environment, and New Zealand's management of relations with China. **Ambassador Lawrence Anderson** highlights Singapore's role within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and **Ambassador Mary Seet-Cheng** outlines Singapore's strong connections with Pacific Island countries.

David Capie, director of the Wellington-based Centre for Strategic Studies, explores the longstanding and close defence and security cooperation between New Zealand and Singapore.

In the section on *Economic Challenges and Business Cooperation*, two renowned economists, **Brian Easton** of New Zealand and **Manu Bhaskaran** of Singapore, discuss the economic challenges their respective countries are facing. **Siah Hwee Ang**, a leading New Zealand-based expert in international business strategy with a specialisation in Asian business affairs, focuses on key areas of bilateral business cooperation, such as Agritech, Logistics, Green Technology, and fintech-related Services. New Zealander **Ken Hickson**, having lived in Singapore for many decades, offers glimpses of his insider observations of Singapore - NZ business partnerships.

Former **Trade Minister George Yeo** and his then New Zealand counterpart, former Minister **Tim Groser**, were at the heart of negotiations on the early Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. It was started by two countries, Singapore and New Zealand. Both George and Tim share their fresh insights into these early beginnings of the massive trade deal, of which little has been known until now.

In the section on *Climate Change, Environment and Sustainable Policies*, **Dave Lowe**, one of the lead authors of a 2007 United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report and co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, relates how he began atmospheric CO₂ measurements in New Zealand over fifty years ago. His essay brings us to the very heart of climate science and discusses New Zealand's climate change policies. New Zealander **Prof. Benjamin Horton** is the Director of the Earth Observatory of Singapore. He and his team of eleven co-authors showcase the outstanding work of the institute on environmental and climate change topics. Be transported to Antarctica and to the volcanoes in Sumatra and the Philippines and find out about the natural hazards threatening South East Asia. **Greg Severinsen** and **Raewyn Peart** of the Environmental Defence Society explore New Zealand's recent turbulent experience of environmental law reform.

Sir Richard Taylor, one of New Zealand's most prominent creators and innovators and a winner of four Oscars and a number of BAFTA awards, shares insights into the making of the country's successful film industry. He provides intriguing glimpses into the founding of Wellington-based Wētā Workshop, his partnership with iconic film director Peter Jackson, and his passion for creating films. **Kennie Ting**, the former Director of Singapore's Asian Civilisation Museum, projects the amazing vision and journey for the museum while **Prof. Hoe Su Fern** analyses the vibrant arts scene in Singapore.



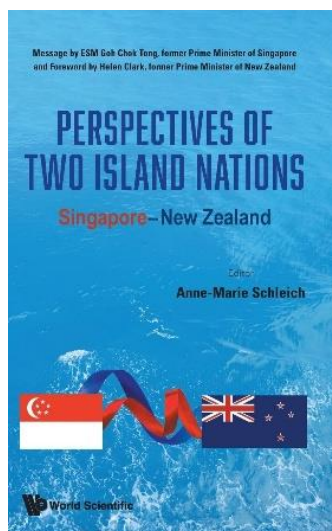
New Zealand's Retirement Commissioner **Jane Wrightson** analyses retirement policies in New Zealand, with a focus on the situation of older women who are disadvantaged by the current system. **Dr Kanwaljit Soin**, former president of the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) and successful book author, offers a great insight into ageing, one of the major topics of modern society. Her essay on "Ageing successfully in Singapore" is a must read for everyone.

Gabriele Rush and **William Tan**, the High Commissioners of New Zealand and of Singapore, have penned a joint article on the broad range of bilateral relations. Next year, Singapore and New Zealand will celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations, marking a significant milestone in relations between the two countries.

I wish the readers an enjoyable journey through the many perspectives of Singapore and New Zealand.

Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the editor and the authors. The book *Perspectives of Two Island Nations Singapore – New Zealand* has been published by World Scientific Publishing, Singapore, June 2024. ISBN 978 981 12 8753 4 (hardcover), ISBN 978-981-12-8755-8 (e-book).

Get your copy at <https://doi.org/10.1142/1370>





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