

International Conference
North America and Oceania: issues in relations
between two changing cultural and political areas

This international conference aims to reflect on the characteristics and complexity of current relations between the countries or regions of North America and Oceania, as well as engage in a comparative study of their nations' and territories' approaches to shared issues of regional or global significance.

For the scope of this conference, "North America" will refer to Canada, the United States, and the island states and territories of the Caribbean. Oceania encompasses Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, the dozen other sovereign states among the southern and equatorial Pacific Islands, and the various dependent territories in the region¹.

As the United States under President Obama engages more thoroughly with South-East Asia, and diplomatic tensions increase between the United States and China regarding maritime law in the South China Sea, Australia has been contributing to an American military consolidation in the region. By 2017, some 2,500 US Navy personnel are expected to be deployed in Darwin (capital of the Northern Territory), and the two countries will be enhancing their air force and naval cooperation, with Australia taking part in a programme of anti-missile ballistic defence in the Asia-Pacific. This military collaboration between the United States and Australia, and the political and commercial issues surrounding it, is a particularly visible recent example of cooperation between two geographically distant but geopolitically connected regions – a cooperation marked by agreements and disagreements, benefits but also limitations and disadvantages. As for New Zealand, since the 1980s it has operated a more independent diplomatic policy in relation to the United States, due largely to its anti-nuclear activism. New Zealand has, however, found Canada to be a privileged partner in many areas.

Beyond political and economic issues, relations between these two regions also cover social, legal, environmental and cultural aspects, which will be examined during this conference. For example, strong partnerships between First Nations Canadians and New Zealand Maori, who engage in a variety of cultural exchanges and cooperate in advancing considerations on shared issues of Indigenous communities' self-determination and citizenship under neo-liberal national governments. The history of relations between these regions will highlight the varied issues which have bound together, in cooperation or in conflict, their respective agents since the late 19th century.

The second aspect of this conference, a comparative perspective focusing on specific issues, may for instance draw out the characteristics, functioning and achievements of regional cooperation policies in each of these two regions, particularly between island states and territories. A comparative study of the functioning and development priorities or methods put forward by the Pacific Islands Forum and the Association of Caribbean States would enable an assessment of island territories' place and role in these two regions, as well as of the extent of some of their efforts' reach more globally. A study of island states' struggles within the framework of AOSIS (the Alliance of Small Island States, which includes Caribbean and Pacific islands) would connect the aforementioned comparative approach with an analysis of elements of cooperation between Atlantic and Pacific island countries.

The following are suggested issues to be examined within two broad analytical approaches to the complex relations between these geographic areas:

¹ Commonly used in France, the name *Océanie* excludes Asian or American states with a coast on the Pacific, as well as Asian island states on the ocean's edge. It does, however, include Hawaii.

I. An analysis of bilateral or multilateral relations between the states or societies of North America and those of the Pacific (Oceania), along with the consequences of such relations (benefits and constraints) for the two regions:

- in the field of political, diplomatic, economic, military (for instance, ANZUS), environmental or social relations, not least between small island states (AOSIS);
- in terms of cultural exchanges and influence; this could include the Americanisation of Pacific societies, but also the image the peoples of these regions have developed of one another, and national images purposefully constructed and projected abroad to attract tourists or migrants: controlled representations;
- in the field of shared diplomatic policies and cooperation with other geographic areas or nations (in particular, China, a factor of political conflict between these regions);
- etc.

II. A comparative analysis of how countries in these regions address specific issues:

- the decolonisation process;
- national self-definition, balancing a cultural or demographic British or French legacy with Indigenous and / or migrant cultures and ethnicity. This issue would encompass a comparative analysis of national policies regarding Indigenous peoples and immigration policies, and (where relevant) states' transitions towards multiculturalism. The question of cultural diversity would lead to a comparison of language policies, or more generally of the cultural policies applied by the states of these two regions;
- the adaptation and functioning of political or judicial institutions of British or (in the Micronesian states formerly under U.S. sovereignty) American origin, along with the values and principles which underpin them;
- the relative decline of relations with the United Kingdom, and the development of intra-regional relations;
- the specificities and extent of relations between states and their island dependent territories, whether the latter be fully incorporated into the dominant state, or subject to a treaty of cooperation which grants autonomy to the dependent territory;
- etc.

This interdisciplinary conference welcomes researchers in the humanities and social sciences, natural sciences, political science, law, etc. Presentations will be given in English or in French. Publication, however, will be in English.

Date: November 24 to 26, 2016.

Location : University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (UVSQ), Guyancourt (South of Paris), France.

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