

The 2013 Census & NZ's Strategic Circumstances

- Changes to NZ demographics and to the balance of its external economic interests (reflected in the Census disclosures), are occurring at a time, and in a space, where international relations of the 21st century will differ perceptibly from those of the 20th century.
- NZ's sense of place internationally was shaped in the 20th century by its colonial inheritance, its ties of culture, values and interests – especially economic interests – with distant Atlantic powers. Two world wars and prolonged ideological competition of a cold war, in harness with economic ties, shaped a NZ psychology of western dependency. It influenced too patterns of immigration.
- A liberal democratic system fashioned by the victor nations of the 20th century, amongst whom NZ was numbered, provided a rules based international framework, prized by smaller countries incapable of asserting their interests coercively. The system offered too a zone of comfort where NZ communed readily with like minded governments, big and small.
- NZ material interests were transformed over the latter half of the 20th century by two factors. First, there were persistent protectionist trade policies practised by powerful traditional friends that denied us the full benefits of NZ's efficient, high quality grasslands agriculture; and forced expeditious diversification which transformed NZ rapidly into an authentic global trading nation, thereby manifestly widening its span of external relations interests.
- Second, there was the striking advance from the ranks of the developing countries by a group of economies, notably in East Asia, who seized the opportunities presented by a globalizing international economy. One consequence of their success was the acquired means and growing taste for NZ grassland products and technologies. The abiding lesson here was that future NZ prosperity required new partnerships that depended vitally upon cultivation of political/diplomatic relationships to assure predictable economic ties, so that NZ commercial agility could take advantage of new opportunity. In East Asia that entails NZ political/diplomatic support for regional cooperation on terms favoured by regional governments themselves, rather than on a basis preferred or directed by non regional powers to privilege their interests.
- It remains, vital that the newly emergent economies (NEC) accept to conduct their interests according to the rules based international system. They have given necessary assurances but

expect, not unreasonably, a greater role in the management and future agenda setting of the international institutions that reflects their emerging global importance.

- Here there is a supreme test. It will be necessary that major western powers concede monopolies of command and influence. It is in NZ interest that such effective adaptation occurs notwithstanding our traditional friendships with those monopoly owning powers. The fact is that the NEC are demonstrating that to be modern and successful in this globalizing world does not necessarily require that a country be, or become, western. For NZ the intensifying experience of extensive economic connexions with China, and its different values, interests and history conclusively eclipses our 20th century psychology of dependency.
- This threshold moment points in the direction of a more hybrid international order for the 21st century – just as the 2013 Census points towards a more hybrid NZ. The paramount need will be to make the world safer for diversity. That does not mean that NZ must compromise core values or ideals but it does require judicious decision making in international relations, that preserves established relationships but also vitally extends connexions in new directions determined according to NZ judgement.
- Risk of war between great powers has receded as the new century begins, although regional conflict abounds in several places. The China-US relationship will shape the tone and direction of 21st century international relations including for NZ which must studiously cultivate even handed relationships with both. American military power remains supreme but the immense burdens of seemingly open ended combat, of serious economic insolvency and inadequate financial regulation plus a dysfunctional governmental system of checks and balances (between executive, legislature and judiciary) perforce diminish US leadership credentials.
- No one country can anyway, no matter how powerful, surmount alone prospective international dangers of the 21st century (climate change, illegal migration, weapons proliferation, internationalised terrorism etc. etc.). Collective effort is indispensable. A reinvigorated international rules based system inclusive of all nations without exception, especially the US, is central to peaceable 21st century progress.

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October 2013