

Washington's Re-discovery of the Pacific

Associate Professor Patricia O'Brien, Georgetown University

Thursday 6 October 2022: **9am-10am** AEDT [USA: Wednesday 5 October 2022: 6pm-7pm EDT] **Webinar**

Traces of the United States' long and layered ties with the Pacific Islands are hard to find in Washington D.C. Apart from the names of iconic battles chiselled into the Washington Mall's second world war memorial, evidence of America's complex Pacific history stretching back to the beginning of the Republic is not there.

Until very recently, this absence was replicated throughout Washington's institutions, where the Pacific Islands have been at the back of mind since those epic battles were fought 80 years ago.

But over the past few months, things have changed. Responding to the increasing presence of China in the Pacific, most notably the security pact signed with the Solomon Islands in April, Washington is now undergoing a Pacific re-discovery that goes all the way to the top. On 28-29 September, US President Joe Biden hosted Pacific leaders at the White House for the first-ever US-Pacific Island Country Summit, to demonstrate the United States' deep and enduring partnership with Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region.



US Navy Hospital Ship USNS MERCY in Palau participating in Pacific Partnership, the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific.

What are the key takeaways from the Summit? How might the Biden administration reshape its approach to the region? What role does Australia have to play?

AIIA Victoria invites you to join Patricia O'Brien to discuss the US's renewed geopolitical focus on the Pacific.



Associate Professor Patricia O'Brien is faculty in the Asian Studies Program at Georgetown University, Washington D.C. teaching on Pacific pasts, presents and futures. She is also a Visiting Fellow with the Department of Pacific Affairs at Australian National University, Canberra, where she was an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in the School of History from 2014 to 2019. From 2001 to 2013 she was the resident Australian and Pacific historian at Georgetown University. She was the J. D. Stout Fellow in New Zealand Studies at Victoria University Wellington in 2012 and the Jay I. Kislak Fellow in American Studies at the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress, Washington DC in 2011.

She is the author of [Tautai: Sāmoa, World History and the Life and Ta'isi](#) (O. F. Nelson (2017)); *The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific* (2006) and is co-editor with Joy Damousi of *League of Nations: Histories, Legacies and Impact* (2018). She has also written numerous other Pacific-focused works on gender, empire, violence, and colonial cultural histories.

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