

## Rising Powers of the Pacific: Oceania's Growing Influence in Global Affairs

*Featuring Dr. Mary Therese Perez Hattori, Director of the Pacific Islands Development Program*

The Phoenix Committee on Foreign Relations is proud to present the Rising Powers of the Pacific. This virtual program is complimentary to the general public and features a keynote by Dr. Mary Therese Perez Hattori, the Director of Pacific Islands Development Program.

In 2022 the Solomon Islands signed a security agreement with China, a mere few days before a top American official was planning to visit. <sup>1</sup>

The deal immediately stoked fears that the military pact could increase tension in the area, with opposition leaders in the country hesitant to believe that the deal wouldn't lead to a Chinese military base in the country. The Solomon Islands has been "the heart of a geopolitical tug of war" since it switched its diplomatic recognition of China from Taiwan to the People's Republic of China in 2019. <sup>2</sup>

With the country delaying its 2023 national election in September, the country has also seemed to "embrace Chinese technological infrastructure" as it has taken on debt that the World Bank has warned as "unsustainable". <sup>3</sup> China's growing influence in the area was more apparent when, during a meeting of the Biden Administration with Pacific island nations, the Solomon Islands delayed signing a joint declaration, citing that it would need "further discussion." <sup>4</sup>

As these events unfold, it is clear that other nations in the region are concerned, as the New Zealand foreign minister called the security partnership between the Solomon Islands and China "unwelcome and unnecessary." <sup>5</sup>

Against this backdrop, PCFR will host a discussion on the rising influence of Oceania with Dr. Mary Therese Perez Hattori. Dr. Perez Hattori will provide a comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical and economic dynamics of the region and the ways in which Oceania is positioning itself as a key player in the global arena. Attendees will discover the reasons behind the U.S.'s complacency and failure to respond to China's foreign policy toward the region.



Dr. Mary Therese Perez Hattori is the Director of the Pacific Islands Development Program. Previously she was a scholarship program specialist in the East-West Center's Education Program and Director of the Center for Teaching & Learning and Associate Professor of Education at Chaminade University. A native of Chamoru of Guåhan (Guam) she is a community organizer and advocate for Pacific islanders in Hawai'i, co-organizer of cultural events such as the Annual Cultural Animation Film Festival, the Annual Celebrate Micronesia Festival, Micronesian Women's Summit, and Oceania on the Reel, and teacher/mentor of students in Pacific Studies, Learning Design & Technology, and the UHM & San Francisco State University Educational Doctorate programs. Dr. Perez Hattori received her EdD, MEd, and BEd all at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

[\[1\] China signs security deal with Solomon Islands, alarming neighbors](#)

[\[2\] Id.](#)

[\[3\] China's Mad Dash Into a Strategic Island Nation Breeds Resentment](#)

[\[4\] Solomon Islands rejects Biden's Pacific outreach as China looms large](#)

[\[5\] Supra note 1](#)

## Speaker

Dr. Mary Therese Perez Hattori is Director of the Pacific Islands Development Program. Prior to this, she was a Scholarship Program Specialist in the East-West Center's Education Program, Director of the Center for Teaching & Learning and Associate Professor of Education at Chaminade University; Outreach Director of the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at UHM; and Associate Professor of Information Technology and Director of the Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Technology at Kapi'olani Community College.

A native Chamoru of Guåhan (Guam), she is a community organizer and advocate for Pacific islanders in Hawai'i, co-organizer of cultural events such as the Annual Cultural Animation Film Festival, the Annual Celebrate Micronesia Festival, Micronesian Women's Summit, and Oceania on the Reel, and teacher/mentor of students in Pacific Studies, Learning Design & Technology, and the UHM & San Francisco State University Educational Doctorate programs which are part of the Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate. She is Affiliate Graduate Faculty of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and the USC Rossier School of Education. Dr. Hattori is also an author, poet, public speaker, and philanthropist.



**Dr. Mary Therese Perez Hattori**

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