AUKUS and the Securitization of the South Paci ic Island States: Entrapment, Abandonment, and the Security Dilemma in the South Paci ic

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Abbreviations

AFP	Australian Federal Police
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APF	Asia-Pacific Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUKUS	Australia, United Kingdom, United States Treaty
BRI	China's Belt Road Initiative
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DKI APCSS	Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
G7	Group of Seven
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IPEF	Indo-Pacific Economic Framework
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PEV	Pacific Elder's Voice
PIC	Pacific Island Countries
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
Quad	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
USINDOPACOM	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command
VNSDP	Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan

Chapter One
Introduction

"Geopolitical point-scoring means less than little to anyone whose community is slipping beneath the rising seas…"
Commodore Frank Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji (2022)

‘Large Ocean State’ is the term that the President of Palau, Tommy Remsengesau Jr., used to describe his Island nation when addressing the International Union for Conservation of Nature. A large Ocean State denotes the island’s small land area but large exclusive economic zones (Chan, 2018). This self-identification follows a trend of Pacific Island Nations asserting their autonomy. Leprince (2022) studied the use of the ‘New Pacific Diplomacy’, where the Pacific Island States are using their regional corporation to push regional agendas such as Climate Change onto the international stage. The Pacific Islands are often sidelined in shaping the security narrative of the region, which has been dictated by the strategic interests of external powers (O’Keefe, 2022, p.26). The Pacific Islands have been unified in their security narrative, which is that climate change is the biggest threat to our states. This was aptly stated by former Prime Minister of Fiji, Commodore Frank

Bainimarama, in his remarks highlighted above.

Bainimarama’s remarks reflected the increasing incursions into the Pacific Islands by China, the US and Australia to establish Embassies, provide development aid, push trade, and seek out security alliances. In August 2023, the United States established a USAID office in Suva that would look at nine Pacific Island countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, Samoa, Nauru,

Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau (Naviticoko, 2023). The USAID Administrator Powers remarked at the opening of the office that the US was committed to deepening its relationship with Pacific Island Countries; it will not force countries to choose the US but would like to provide options to work with “partners whose values and vision of the future align with your own” (Naviticoko, 2023).

A year before this, in June 2022, China placed its bid to the Pacific, a trade and security pact called “China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision”,

committing to double the volume of bilateral trade between China and the Pacific countries, which would compete with the US's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity and described as a direct challenge to Australia's aid and trading partnerships in the Pacific. China's bid was a shift from its traditional bilateral cooperation partnerships to multilateralism (Booth, 2022). Ten Pacific leaders were amenable to China's bid. These are only two examples of the bids for partnership and cooperation that have been making their way into the Pacific region since the inception of the AUKUS Treaty; this in no way means that bids by China were not proposed prior to AUKUS, but the US's presence in the Pacific has significantly stepped up since the AUKUS announcement in September 2021.

Australia – The Pacific's Traditional Aid Partner

As decolonisation spread across the South Pacific, so did Australia's influence, creating diplomatic ties with newly independent nations. As newly independent island nations embarked on the intricate path of self-governance, navigating the challenges of nationbuilding, economic development, and political stability. This period was not without its disruptions, as evidenced by political turmoil in certain states, such as the Fiji coup of 1987 and the Bougainville crisis in Papua New Guinea in 1989. Australia, having experienced firsthand the potential security threats posed by a weakened Pacific region during World War II, when Japan's advancement into the Pacific posed a significant challenge, recognized the inherent connection between its own national security and the stability of its Pacific neighbours (Wallis, 2012). As Wallis (2012) aptly noted, Australia acknowledged that security threats were more likely to emanate from weakened states rather than powerful ones. This understanding informed Australia's approach to regional engagement, shaped by a persistent concern for the security of its immediate vicinity.

The "Arc of Instability" was used by Australian Politicians and in policy documents to describe the stretch of countries from East Timor to the South Pacific Island States surrounding Australia, highlighting the region's vulnerability to political instability and potential security challenges (Dibb, 1999, p. 18). However, this term was met with criticism from Hegarty (2004), who argued that it oversimplified the region's complex and diverse political landscape, failing to capture the nuances of individual states and their unique challenges. Australia's strategic priorities for the South Pacific region were outlined in its 2009 Defence White Paper, which identified "the security, stability, and cohesion of our immediate neighbourhood" as the nation's primary focus (Department of Defence, 2009, p. 12). This commitment to regional security extended beyond military deterrence, encompassing diplomatic engagement, development assistance, and capacity-building efforts aimed at strengthening the resilience and self-reliance of Pacific nations. Wallis (2012, p.11) observed that Australia's policy debates on the South Pacific region were often framed through a security lens, with the nation assuming a sense of responsibility for securing the "Arc of Instability." This security-centric approach, while understandable considering Australia's national interests, needed to be balanced with a recognition of the region's unique challenges and the need for a multifaceted approach to engagement.

Australia has become a significant partner for South Pacific Island States, and this is achieved through its official development assistance to the Pacific. Australia has a bilateral development aid relationship with all 14 independent countries in the South Pacific. Between

2008 and 2021, Australia provided A$18.10 billion in grants to the Pacific, which represents

40% of all aid flowing into the Pacific during the same period (Lowy Institute, 2023). Australia is considered a significant security partner for the Island countries as it is a

signatory to the 2018 Boe Declaration and the 2014 Biketawa Declaration. The former

declaration is the region's declaration of an expanded concept of security, most prominently climate change (PIF, 2018). The latter recognises the need for intervention in times of crisis in member states (PIF, 2014). Australia has also engaged in security alliances across the Pacific with States such as but not limited to Vanuatu and Fiji.

Introducing the AUKUS Treaty

The AUKUS Treaty is a trilateral security partnership announced by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, US President Joe Biden, and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on 15 September 2021. The explicit objective of the AUKUS is to enhance peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region (Wintour, 2021) through cooperation in the areas of security, defence, and technology, with a specific focus on nuclear-powered submarines. The implied intent of AUKUS, conversely, is to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific Region (Middleby et al., 2021; Kahn, 2023) by bolstering the deterrence and defence capabilities of AUKUS countries' allies in the region (Kahn, 2023). AUKUS represents not only a significant development in the Indo-Pacific region but a shift away from the concept of the Asia-Pacific region. The nuclear proponents of the submarine are of particular concern to the Pacific Islands due to the history of nuclear tests being carried out in the region between 1946 and 1966 and the Fukushima reactor damage in 2011 (Keen, 2023). The Pacific Region states are party to the 1985 Rarotonga Treaty, which covers the expansive Pacific Ocean and declares this whole area a Nuclear Free Zone. It is a legally binding document for state parties (UN, 2019).

The announcement of AUKUS has been met with mixed reactions from Pacific Island States expressing concerns regarding the plausible militarisation of the region and the potential for nuclear proliferation (Pacific Elders' Voice, 2023). The South Pacific is a crucial strategic zone for superpowers seeking global hegemony. Following the conclusion of the

Cold War, the United States maintained its dominance in the region. However, China has lately emerged as a crucial partner for Pacific Island States, particularly in terms of development aid. The AUKUS alliance and the Indo-Pacific concept are part of a US-led plan to contain China's influence in the region and preserve US supremacy. This has had a significant impact on the geopolitical landscape of the South Pacific.

 Since the establishment of the AUKUS Treaty, external powers have been increasing not only their excursions into the Pacific but their presence in the region as well. For example, the establishment of a security treaty between China and the Solomon Islands in April 2023 (GBU Press, 2022). The increasing presence of external powers and the establishment of bilateral security alliances across the Pacific are constantly changing the geopolitics of the region. The Prime Minister of Samoa, Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, in opening the 6th South West Pacific Heads of Maritime Forces Meeting in Apia, warned all the heads of the Pacific's Maritime Forces to be mindful of the increasing geopolitical interest and attention that is being put on the Blue Pacific region (Island Business, 2023). This is because it challenges one of the key tenets of the Pacific's foreign policy, which is to be a 'friend to all, enemies to none' (Bartley, 2021, p.28). The increasing geo-strategic contest has implications for the security of the Pacific Islands, which needs to be studied.

Research aims, objectives and the research question

The aim of this research study is to assess the impact of the AUKUS Treaty on the South Pacific using the concepts of securitisation, security dilemma, entrapment, and abandonment with a particular focus on the Pacific's relationship with its key development partner, Australia.

This research paper is based on two key objectives. The first is to determine whether the AUKUS Treaty presents a security dilemma for the South Pacific. The second objective is to

assess whether the Treaty and Australia's differing security priorities would bring about entrapment or abandonment of the South Pacific.

Hence, the research question to be answered is:

> What are the political and security implications of the AUKUS Treaty's securitisation of the Pacific Region, the region's relationship with Australia, and does the Treaty evoke a security dilemma for the South Pacific?

Outline of Chapters

The chapters of this research paper are thus structured as follows:

Chapter Two of this research paper outlines an extensive literature review. Focusing on the topic area and research question, the relevant academic literature is divided into three sections. The debate around the concept of Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific region is outlined. The second section discusses the academic underpinnings of the concept of securitization before discussing Chand and Zenel's (2021) article, which this research paper builds on. The final section of the literature review outlines the academic literature on AUKUS in relation to the concept of security dilemma.

Chapter three outlines the methodology on which this research paper is premised and is divided into four sections. In the first section, the research aims and objectives are outlined, followed by the research question that will be addressed in this paper. The second section discusses the international relations theory of neorealism as the theoretical approach of this paper, followed by the theoretical framework that guides the analysis of this paper, which are the concepts of securitisation, security dilemma, entrapment, and abandonment. The third section will outline the research method employed, which is the qualitative document analysis method. This section will outline the advantages of this method and the reason it was utilised as the preferred method over discourse analysis. This section will also highlight how the

research method will be applied to the research objectives and the data this paper relies on. The final section will discuss limitations, biases, and ethical considerations.

Subsequently, chapters four, five, six, and seven will discuss the Melanesian states of Papua New Guinea, the Fiji Islands, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, focusing on four key aspects, which are the development partnership with Australia, the National Security Strategy, diplomatic relations between the countries and the security alliances of each state.

Chapter eight is the analysis part of this research, which is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the security dilemma in the South Pacific, utilising the data outlined in the previous four chapters. The second part discusses Entrapment or Abandonment and utilises the significant incident data in the preceding chapters to assess the state's behaviour. Finally, this part will outline the political and security implications of AUKUS.

The conclusion is contained in Chapter nine and summarises the research objectives, methodology utilised and the key findings of this paper.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

The security narrative in the Pacific region has long been dictated by the external powers defined by their strategic interests in the region. Pacific Island State's agency and autonomy are often overlooked and are sidelined in matters concerning the Pacific region (O'Keefe, 2022, p.26). The AUKUS Treaty demonstrates this significantly. As a party to AUKUS and the Pacific region's most significant development partner, Australia, is often shaping the Pacific security narrative without consulting the Island States. In this literature review, the pivotal shift in regional concepts of Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific will be discussed as a transition from economic to security cooperation. The process of securitization will be outlined, and this literature will demonstrate how the securitising actors, Australia, the US, Japan, and India, have in their political discourse and policies allocated the 'Indo-Pacific' region as a referent object to be secured from the referent subject, China. This review will demonstrate that in securitizing this region, security actors, Australia, the US, and the UK, have taken extraordinary measures to protect the Indo-Pacific region, most significantly, the AUKUS Treaty, which is the focus of this research paper. This review will also demonstrate that in securitizing the region, States within the region that are not party to the treaty are faced with security dilemmas intensified by the fear of either abandonment or entrapment in the geostrategic competition for influence between the US and China. The Indo-Pacific covers a vast area; however, the focus of this research and review is on the Pacific Island States and its relationship with its key development partner, Australia. The literature review is divided into four sections. Firstly, as the AUKUS Treaty is over the Indo-Pacific region, it is essentially to discuss the concept of the Indo-Pacific and the Asia-Pacific region. The review

will demonstrate that Asia-Pacific is characterized by economic cooperation, whilst the Indo-Pacific is characterized by security interests and cooperation. Secondly, this review will discuss the securitisation theory and the role it plays in 'region-making', specifically the 'Indo-Pacific' region. The review will then discuss the political and security implications of securitizing the region with a particular focus on the Pacific. The third section of this literature review will discuss AUKUS and the security dilemma. The final section will outline the justification for this research and the research question to be addressed.

2.1 Indo-Pacific or Asia-Pacific Region?

The concepts of 'Asia-Pacific' and 'Indo-Pacific' are at times erroneously used interchangeably and, to an extent, rational, given both concepts ostensibly delineate identical geographical boundaries. Dirlik (1992, p.55) argues that defining the region is dependent on the questions of who is making the definition and when this definition is being made. Regions and continents are social constructs, a product of imagination demarcating sections of the globe motivated by strategic interests for a purpose (Köllner et al., 2022). As a significant portion of the debate around the AUKUS Treaty concerns the 'region' it encompasses, it is pivotal to discuss the conceptual shift from the traditional 'Asia-Pacific' to the contemporary concept of the 'Indo-Pacific'. This research paper neither intends to redefine the concepts nor supplement the academic literature on these concepts. However, the concepts are integral to understanding the AUKUS Treaty and the dynamics of regional geopolitics. This section of the literature review outlines the academic literature discussing the key geographical difference between these concepts, the economic and political salience, and the regional mechanisms or lack thereof, centred in these regions.

The Asia-Pacific region is broadly understood as encompassing all states within the continents of Asia and Oceania whose coasts touch the Pacific Ocean. Eades and Cooper

(2010, p. 2) characterize the region as being an amoeba: the nucleus being China, Japan, Korea, the ASEAN states, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and the smaller Pacific Island States. The peripheral of the 'nucleus' is constantly changing, mainly depending on the global political economy. Post-Cold War, US hegemony persisted in Asia and the Pacific, littered with fastdeveloping economies and newly independent countries (Solomon, 1991, p. 54). The US projected its power into the Asia-Pacific region through countries and territories such as but not limited to South Korea, the Philippines, Hawaii, the Marshall Islands, and Guam (Eades and Cooper, 2010, p.3). Consequently, the US considers itself an integral part of the AsiaPacific region, expanding its geographical definition to include Peru, Mexico, Chile, Canada, and Russia (DKI APCSS, n.d.).

Japanese Foreign Minister Takeo Miki mentioned the 'Asia-Pacific' as a new concept. The Foreign Minister introduced Japan's Asia-Pacific policy in December 1966: a forerunner in regionalism, diplomacy, and subsequent regional economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (Terada, 1998, p.338). Miki illuminated that the policy addressed disparities between developed and developing countries, the critical cause of which was poverty. By improving economic cooperation between the North and South, the South could alleviate poverty and attain prosperity (Terada, 1998, p.339). Japan emerged in the 1980s as an economic superpower, and its relationship with the US was considered pivotal for the security and prosperity of the AsiaPacific region. Additionally, the interdependent Pacific Rim economies were solely responsible for shaping the Asia-Pacific region (Solomon, 1991, p.55). However, economic cooperation further complicated the definition of 'Asia-Pacific' by requiring context. Economic cooperation would be established between a few but not all states within the broader Asia-Pacific region and would still be referred to as 'Asia-Pacific'. For example, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has 21 members, which does not include any

South Pacific Island States except Papua New Guinea (APEC, 2023). Similarly, the Asia-Pacific Forum (APF) has 26 members, not including any South Pacific Islands States except Fiji and Samoa (APF, 2023). Asia-Pacific is an elusive concept whose spatial focus is heavily dependent on time, perspective, and context. While the region is complex to define geographically, a distinguishing feature of the Asia-Pacific region is its focus on economic cooperation.

The concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' has been the subject of much academic and political debate since its introduction into the contemporary political sphere in 2007 by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. In Abe's prominent address to the Parliament of India entitled the

"Confluence of the Two Seas", the Prime minister highlighted the dynamic coupling of the Pacific and Indian Oceans as "seas of freedom and prosperity" breaking away geographical boundaries for a "broader Asia to take form" (Abe, 2007). Womack (2023) contends that the term 'Indo-Pacific' is problematic and ambiguous, whilst Heiduk and Wacker (2020) contend that the concept is neither purely descriptive nor is it value-neutral given it is a political term. Traditionally, the Indo-Pacific region is defined geographically as encompassing all the countries bound to the Indian and Pacific Oceans (Royal Australian Navy, 2022). According to the 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy of the US, the Indo-Pacific region stretches across the US Pacific

Coastline to the Indian Ocean (US Government, 2022, p. 4). The regional concept shift from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific was made under the Trump Administration (US Government, 2022, p. 4). Australia, conversely, began using the concept of Indo-Pacific in its 2012 policy document: "Australian in the Asian Century: White Paper", authored by then Prime Minister Julia Gillard (2012). Australia was the first country to utilise the regional concept in a

government policy defining its foreign and security interests (Parry, 2022, p.1). Shortly after publication, the White Paper disappeared from official government websites due to the election of a new Prime Minister (Tyler, 2023). However, not before its contents were analysed by academia (Henry 2016; Mascitelli and O'Mahony 2014) and Parliamentary and Government researchers (Parry 2022). Mirroring the US, the Indo-Pacific is expounded in Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper (Australian Government, p.1) and its 2016 Defence White Paper

(Australian Government, p.13): defining the Indo-Pacific as the region covering the Pacific Ocean, Eastern Indian Ocean, Southeast and North Asia, and the US.

The Indo-Pacific region has been characterised as the "epicentre of 21st-century geopolitics" by the US National Security Strategy (Biden Jr., 2022, p. 37). The region's economic heft and pivotal role in global security are key considerations drawing Washington's attention to the Indo-Pacific region in 2017 (Pilupaka and Musaddi, 2021, p.3). The US's characterization of the Indo-Pacific region was echoed by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison during an address at the 2021 G7 Summit, calling for global cooperation to maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region (Galloway, 2021). The US has been clear and unequivocal in its stance for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific", strategizing to reinforce itself in the region and not tolerating any Chinese behaviour that would undermine regional stability (Biden, 2022, p.7). The Indo-Pacific is a conceptual framework and not a regional organisation whose architecture would include an amalgamation of frameworks from which the Quad will have a crucial role (Pilupaka and Musaddi 2021, p.7). Clear Indo-Pacific strategies by the US and

Australia in relation to China have academics and political commentators such as Womack

(2023), Siow (2021) and Wizarat (2022) positively contending that the concept of 'IndoPacific' is a political construct designed to contain China and its influence in the region.

ASEAN adopted an "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" (ASEAN, 2019), endorsing the concept of an Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN's outlook on the Indo-Pacific contends that this is an opportunity for economic growth and dialogue on cooperation instead of rivalry (ASEAN, 2019, p.2). The Outlook does not explicitly mention the rivalry between the US and China in this region, and ASEAN is neither expressing support for the US's containment strategy nor rejecting China (Tyler, 2019; Hui Yee, 2019). To further the economic cooperation aspect of the Indo-Pacific region, US President Biden launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in May 2022, which currently has 14 member countries (US Department of Commerce, n.d.), most of which are members of the APEC and does not include China. IPEF is a more focused structured initiative requiring member states' commitment, unlike APEC, which is based on voluntary cooperation. IPEF is an ongoing initiative that is still developing its framework. Fiji is the only South Pacific Island nation that is a member of the IPEF, and since it requires commitments and concrete results, other Pacific nations will be hesitant to join in as although APEC is voluntary, Pacific Island States are not party to APEC.

The Indo-Pacific and Asia-Pacific regions are difficult to define, with the former encompassing a larger geographical area than the latter. However, each region is characterized by one purpose, the Asia-Pacific region is characterized by its economic cooperation. The IndoPacific is a politically laden term explicitly directed to the containment of China and is characterized by its focus on security.

2.2 Securitizing the 'Indo-Pacific'

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The concept of securitization was introduced by Ole Waever in the 1993 article "Securitization and Desecuritization" (Waever, 1995). Associated with the Copenhagen School of thought, which developed the concept further by providing a framework outlining the essential elements of the process of securitization in Buzan et al. (1997) "Security: A New Framework of Analysis". Securitization is simply defined as the process by which an issue is transformed from a normal political matter into a security issue through speech acts, thus enabling extraordinary measures to be taken to address it (Buzan et al., 1997, p.25). Securitization has four key elements: a securitizing actor, an existential threat, a referent object, and an audience. Traditionally, as security issues were primarily constructed around the military-political sphere, the referent object was the nation-state and its territorial boundaries (Buzan et al., 1997, p.21); however, within the securitization framework, any ordinary issue can become securitized, and the referent object can be either the state, a group of people, culture, or values (Buzan et al., 1997, p.24). Securitization can only be successful when the securitizing actor convinces its audience that there is an existential threat to the referent object; the reality of such a threat is immaterial.

The concept of securitization has been comprehensively refined by Thierry Balzacq, who defines securitization as:

> "An articulated assemblage of practices whereby the heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, images repertories, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilised by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions) about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject

with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customised policy must be immediately undertaken to block it." (Balzacq, 2011, p.3)

The definition by Balzacq is significant as it expands from the primary 'speech-act' to consider policy tools, images, and stereotypes. Additionally, Balzacq distinguishes between the referent object and the referent subject. The former is the entity that is threatened, whilst the latter is the entity that is carrying out the threat. This comprehensive refinement of the definition of securitization has allowed Balzacq to apply the securitization theory to a number of security issues, such as the Eurozone crisis, the Arab Spring, and the War on Terror (Balzacq, 2016).

The theoretical framing of securitization by Thierry Balzacq was used by the authors Bibek Chand and Zenel Garcia (2021) in examining the role of securitization in the process of region-making, specifically, the shift from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific. The study looks at the transformation of the region from Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific through the securitization discourse of four key actors, namely: the US, India, Japan, and Australia. Utilizing Balzacq's comprehensive definition of securitization, which extends past just mere speech acts to include distinct policy proposals, the authors refer to several speeches and policy proposals, including but not limited to Japan Prime Minister's "Confluence of the Two Seas" speech, India's Act East Policy, Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy and 2016 Defence White Papers, and the Trump administration's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" strategy. The authors argue that although some policies and discourses of the critical actors do not name China specifically, the activities and context provided within the policy and discourse make it apparent that Beijing's policies are being referenced, and China is considered the referent subject. The referent object that is to be secured is the Indo-Pacific region, freedom of navigation within the region, an open airspace and territorial sovereignty. The US, Australia,

India, and Japan are the key drivers of the pivot away from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific, thus validating that the Indo-Pacific is an object to be secured from China.

Chand and Zenel's (2021) paper extensively navigated the significant security discourse produced by the countries of India, Japan, the US, and Australia as key security actors resulting in the securitization of the Indo-Pacific region. The security discourse around the referent object, as argued by the authors, is based on maritime trade routes or sea lanes of communication that have chokepoints along the South China Sea and over air navigation as well (Chand and Zenel, 2012, p.16). Although the geographical limitations covered by the 'Indo-Pacific' extend over the Pacific Ocean, the security discourse and the authors' arguments are confined to Asia, India included. Arguably, the US, Australia, and Japan are situated along the Pacific rim, but this doesn't detract from the exclusion of the whole Pacific region in an argument that encapsulates the 'region-making' aspect' of the Indo-Pacific. To clarify, this author is not suggesting that the exclusion of the Pacific invalidates Chand and Garia's argument of 'Indo-Pacific' but instead pointing out that academia is mostly Asia-oriented.

Consequently, the shift from 'Asia-Pacific' to 'Indo-Pacific' denotes the diverging security priorities of Australia and the Pacific Island Countries. Bartley (2021) iterates this argument by discussing the different policies outlining each party's views on what constitutes a security priority for them. According to Australia's 2020 Defence Strategic Update, Australia aims to work together with the Pacific Island States to prevent any action, threats, or potential threats against the countries' mutual interests, considering China's increasing influence in the

Pacific region. In contrast, the Pacific Island Forum's 2018 Boe Declaration by the Heads of

Island States prioritized climate change as the most significant security threat to the region. Bartley (2021) argues that disagreements over the region's security priorities between Australia and the Pacific Island States have been common and should not be viewed as detrimental to the relationship between the two parties or indicative of Australia's declining influence in the region. It is still uncertain whether this issue would significantly affect Australia's bilateral relationships with the Pacific Island States. The geopolitical landscape has significantly changed since this article was published, requiring a re-look at Australia's influence in the region.

Middleby et al. (2021), like Bartley, also emphasized the significant difference in regional security priorities between Australia and the Pacific Island States. The authors noted that Pacific Island States are now more confidently asserting their agency and are engaging with other partners besides Australia. This is crucial, given the need for more consultation by Australia with the Pacific region before committing to AUKUS. However, Bartley's article, which discusses Pacific leaders' disapproval of Australia's efforts to involve the Pacific Island States in its and its allies' contest with China, was written before the commencement of the AUKUS Treaty. On the other hand, Middleby et al. (2021) highlighted Pacific Island leaders' reactions to the AUKUS announcement.

 Michael O'Keefe (2022) analyses Australia's response to strategic competition in the Pacific Island States. O'Keefe's key argument in this article is that although Australia has fully embraced the Indo-Pacific concept strategically, it has not been able to match this operationally.

Australia has an unbalanced approach to the Indo-Pacific by prioritising the Pacific over the Indian Ocean in its foreign policy engagement. Australia has widened its security scope to include the Indian Ocean but will not be able to shift its focus to the Indian Ocean in the

medium term as it has its hands full, countering China's progress through the Pacific Islands. O'Keefe points out that Australia's Foreign Policy has long incorporated the theme of strategic denial, which the author explains is Canberra being sensitive to foreign interference in Australia's 'backyard'[1] and illustrates this with several case studies of China allegedly attempting to build military bases in Vanuatu, the Fiji Islands, and the Solomon Islands. The author's key argument is that in aligning its foreign policy with the US, Australia's response is more focused on the Pacific than the Indian Ocean, as it has a long history of thwarting interference in the region and may continue to do so for the time being.

Leprince (2022), like O'Keefe, analysed the relationship between Australia and the Pacific Island states but is focused on the divergent understandings of security in the Pacific between them. The Island States are focused on climate change, a non-traditional security threat, while Australia's security concerns are focused on the external influence of power on the region. Leprince's article articulates the shifting security narrative in the Pacific by the Island States themselves and their use of the 'New Pacific Diplomacy' to assert agency and

autonomy. The author explains that the new Pacific diplomacy is people-focused, promoting a regional agenda with wide political engagement and strengthening diplomatic ties. The author uses the example of the island states taking the global stage with a climate change agenda and the negotiations of the Paris Agreement. The author's key argument is that island states are using regional cooperation to push their regional agendas onto an international stage.

[1] An outdated reference commonly used by Australian Poli cians to describe the Pacific Region. This term is no longer used due to Pacific States opposi on; however, the author of this ar cle uses it in context of the period in which he is ar cula ng.

According to JASON (2022), the AUKUS Treaty redefines Australia's role as a strategic partner of the United States. This gives Australia more capacity to intervene outside its borders, extending as far as the South China Sea. The primary role of Australia is to maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region, especially against China's rising power. However, a year after the AUKUS Treaty came into effect, there has been increased uncertainty and volatility in the IndoPacific region. Competing forces are increasing their incursions into the region to secure security partnerships. For example, China has proposed a sweeping regional trade and security pact with ten island nations. The article highlights the significance of the Indo-Pacific region for the contesting powers. However, it primarily focuses on the impact of the treaty on Australia and the states that lie to the north of Australia's border and does not include the impact the treaty has on the South Pacific States.

Keen's (2023) article is focused on AUKUS in the Pacific and considers the Island States' reaction to the March 2023 announcement, providing more details on the provisions of AUKUS and the cooperation between its three parties. Keen discusses the Pacific Island's states concerns are tied to the 300 nuclear tests that were made in the Pacific from 1946 to 1966 and the 2011 Fukushima reactor damage. Accordingly, Keen article is significant as it outlines that the Island States may accept and ultimately understand the reasons driving Australia into building up its security; however, this is separate from the Island States' impending decision on whether to allow its passage through their territorial waters. New Zealand, the article states, has supported the AUKUS Treaty but will not allow the submarines to enter its territorial waters. The article outlines that the Island States recognize that there is competition between the superpowers in the region, but conflict is not something the region can afford.

2.3 AUKUS and the Security Dilemma

Umar et al. (2023) discussed the security dilemma created by the AUKUS Treaty with a particular focus on Southeast Asian countries. The authors utilize the security dilemma as a theoretical framework and posit that the Southeast Asian states are facing a three-tier security dilemma. The authors postulate that the absence of a coherent regional response to AUKUS creates a new security dilemma shaped by ontological security. The dilemma is whether to preserve regional norms by expressing reservations about AUKUS underpinned by noninterventionism or to increase their own national security in response to extra-regional threats. The authors offer a reconceptualised 'regional security dilemma' to explain the relationship between the Southeast Asian states and AUKUS. The authors define regional security dilemma

as:

"A situation in which an uncertain regional security environment, primarily caused by intense great power competition, affects regional cohesion in responding to global security challenges". (Umar et al., 2023)

The three tiers of the new security dilemma are, firstly, the preservation of regional norms amid increasing extra-regional actor engagement; secondly, the rising regional hegemony pushing states to prioritise national security over regional collectivity; and finally, the reliance on great powers for national security. These three tiers explain the differing responses to AUKUS by Southeast Asia. India and Malaysia's responses are categorised under the first tier. Singapore's, the Philippines', and Vietnam's responses are categorised under the second tier, whereby the states are diplomatically engaged with China but are turning to the US to protect national security. The third tier is the diverging responses to AUKUS, which is exacerbated by ASEAN. The regional mechanism is unable to formulate a

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response to AUKUS and simultaneously is unable to demonstrate how the mechanism can be used to respond to

AUKUS. The authors have provided a framework in which to assess the state's responses to AUKUS that, although focused on ASEAN, can be applicable to the Pacific. Granted, there are grave differences between Southeast Asian states' economies, military might, budgets, and resources, but the Pacific places significant importance on regional response.

On the other hand, Sobarin et al. (2021) also analysed the AUKUS Treaty and its potential impact on the Indo-Pacific region, similarly in the context of the security dilemma and the arms race theory. They argued that the Treaty's focus on enhancing Australia's military capabilities could trigger an arms race among key ASEAN states, who might view AUKUS as a precedent for their own arms buildup. Perceiving this as a threat, China could respond by increasing its military presence in the region, exacerbating an already tense geopolitical situation. While the authors acknowledged that AUKUS is not explicitly aimed at countering China's rise, they suggested it could contribute to an already complex and sensitive environment. They also noted the tendency of Indo-Pacific analyses to focus primarily on Asia, overlooking the Pacific Islands, a crucial part of the region. This narrow focus, as Samoa's former Prime Minister highlighted, risks neglecting the interests and concerns of Pacific Island nations (Tuilaepa, 2018).

Malhotra's (2023) article is more recent than that of JASON (2022), assessing the current geopolitical landscape to articulate the implications of AUKUS on the Indo-Pacific, focusing on military build-up. Malhotra highlighted that states are now militarising their foreign policies and activities to secure the Indo-Pacific region and seeking out defence agreement opportunities within the region as well. Key actors such as Japan, the US, China, and Australia are already ramping up their defence expenditures. China and the US have also

increased their excursions into the South China Sea. Malhotra remarks that small states in the region are being pressured to sign defence agreements but does not expand on this point. Malhotra concludes that given the proactive military spending, deployment and partnership opportunities sought by key actors, militarisation is increasing in the Indo-Pacific region in states attempting to bolster their national security.

2.4 Research Question and Justification

The South Pacific region is a significant strategic location for any superpower seeking to increase its global dominance or influence. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the US retained its influence over the region. China began its pivot into the Pacific and, over time, has become an important partner to Pacific Island States in terms of development. The AUKUS Treaty and the concept of the Indo-Pacific are designed to contain China's influence and maintain the US and its allies' dominance within the two oceans. This has significantly impacted the geopolitics of the South Pacific. This research is significant as it will highlight the effects of alliances on smaller states that often need to be seated at the table to discuss matters that will ultimately affect their security. As small Island States, geopolitical competition, broad security treaties, and military buildup have significant security and political implications for the South Pacific. A majority of the literature utilises the broad terms of 'Asia-Pacific' and 'Indo-Pacific' but often leaves out the Pacific, prioritising the 'Asia' and 'Indo' of the broad concepts. The marginalisation of the Pacific and the lack of recognised agency are the key rationales warranting this research. This thesis aims to contribute to the academic literature by enhancing the understanding of the political and security implications of the AUKUS Treaty's securitisation of the South Pacific by focusing on the relationship between the Pacific Island states and its key development partner, Australia. Furthermore, it is to assess whether the treaty evokes a security dilemma

for the Pacific and, in relation to Australia, potentially, if this would result in abandonment or entrapment of the states on the basis of divergent security priorities. Thus, the research question to be answered is:

What are the political and security implications of the AUKUS Treaty's securitisation of the South Pacific region and its relationship with Australia, and does the treaty evoke a security dilemma for the South Pacific?

Chapter Three
Methodology

In this chapter, the methodological approach to this research will be discussed and is outlined in four sections. The first section will outline the research aims and objectives that are the basis of this paper's research question. The second section will discuss the theoretical approach of neorealism and its key criticisms. This will be followed by an outline of the theoretical framework employed in this paper, which is the concepts of security dilemma, abandonment, and entrapment. The third section will discuss the research method of document analysis and, subsequently, a discussion on the data used in this paper. Finally, the limitations, author's biases and ethics will be outlined.

3.1 Research Aims and Objectives

This research aims to study the impact of the AUKUS Treaty on the South Pacific Region using the concepts of securitisation, security dilemma, and, subsequently, entrapment and abandonment. Studying this impact, this research will focus specifically on the relationship between the Pacific Island States and its significant traditional development partner, Australia.

This research aims to determine whether the AUKUS Treaty creates a security dilemma for the South Pacific Island States. Additionally, to assess whether Australia's differing security priority and the AUKUS Treaty would bring about abandonment or entrapment for the Pacific countries.

Thus, the research question to be answered is:

What are the political and security implications of the AUKUS Treaty's

securitisation of the South Pacific Region, the region's relationship with Australia

and does the treaty evoke a security dilemma for the South Pacific?

3.2 Theoretical Approach and Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical approach employed in this research is the theory of neo-realism. Neorealism emphasises the significance of an international system structure in shaping how a state behaves. Neo-realism posits that the international system is characterised by anarchy, meaning that there is no central authority that enforces order. A lack of order breeds insecurity, and as a result, states consistently seek to increase their power to protect themselves (Waltz, 1979). Waltz posits that there are three types of power: military, economic and ideological power. In seeking to balance power, states often create alliances with less powerful states to counter the threat of other powerful states.

Despite the criticisms, neorealism is a valuable tool in understanding the behaviour of states and is the approach or the 'lens' that this research will utilise.

Theoretical Framework

This research paper is premised on the concept of securitisation and the interconnected concepts of security dilemma, entrapment, and abandonment.

Securitisation

Securitization is simply defined as the process by which an issue is transformed from an ordinary political matter into a security issue through speech acts, thus enabling extraordinary measures to be taken to address it (Buzan et al., 1997, p.25). Securitization

has four key elements: a securitizing actor, an existential threat, a referent object, and an audience.

Traditionally, as security issues were primarily constructed around the military-political sphere, the referent object was the nation-state and its territorial boundaries (Buzan et al., 1997, p.21); however, within the securitization framework, any ordinary issue can become securitized, and the referent object can be either the state, a group of people, culture, or values (Buzan et al., 1997, p.24). Securitization can only be successful when the securitizing actor convinces its audience that there is an existential threat to the referent object; the reality of such a threat is immaterial.

The concept of securitization has been comprehensively refined by Thierry Balzacq, who defines securitization as:

> "An articulated assemblage of practices whereby the heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, images repertories, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilised by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions) about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customised policy must be immediately undertaken to block it." (Balzacq, 2011, p.3)

The definition by Balzacq is significant as it expands from the primary 'speech-act' to consider policy tools, images, and stereotypes.

Securitization falls within the realm of post-positivism, which utilises multiple perspectives to conceptualise reality, rejecting positivism's theory of a singular reality.

Postpositivists believe that reality exists but can only be understood imperfectly due to biases

(Popper, 2000, p.7). The preferred qualitative method for securitization is critical discourse analysis which accounts for social conditions, ideologies, and power relations (Fairclough, 2013).

The concept of securitization is an essential framework for this research paper; however, it will not be used as a framework from which analysis will be made. This is because this research will build on the academic article authored by Chand and Zenel (2012), who have analysed a significant amount of discourse produced by Australia, the US, India, and Japan to articulate the process in which the 'Indo-Pacific region' was conceptualised and securitised. The authors identified the securitizing actors as the countries of India, Japan, the US, and Australia; the referent object is the Indo-Pacific region, and the referent subject is

China. The 'Indo-Pacific' region encompasses the Pacific Ocean and, in it, the small Pacific Island States. The AUKUS Treaty is an extraordinary measure taken by the US, Australia, and the UK to secure the referent object, thus creating not only a security dilemma for states within the Indo-Pacific region but also political and security implications. Securitization is outlined in this section as it is the framework that is integral to addressing the research question.

Security Dilemma, Entrapment and Abandonment

The security dilemma is defined by Robert Jervis as a situation in which "the means by which a state tries to increase its security decreases the security of others" (1978, p.186). The concept was first developed by Herz (1950, p.157), who argued that the anarchic nature of the international system creates a situation in which states are constantly in a state of

'selfhelp', essentially meaning that a state must rely on itself for protection, consequently undertaking actions that another state could construe as threatening and in turn react the same. Mearsheimer (2001) argues that uncertainty regarding the intention of a state is unavoidable, and a state cannot be sure whether another state has offensive intentions to match its capabilities, thus creating a dilemma.

Security alliances between allied states are one of the ways in which a state secures itself. Alliances, as explained by Snyder (1984, p.462), can be formed for two reasons; the first is a state being unsatisfied with its security and increases its security by allying, and second, states ally to avoid isolation or to ensure another state does not ally against them. Within an alliance, however, a security dilemma also persists. The main premise of a security alliance is that each party will come to the aid of the other should it be attacked. Abandonment in an alliance occurs when the ally either realigns with the opponent, cancels the alliance, or fails to provide support as per the alliance agreement. On the other hand, entrapment in an alliance is being pulled into an ally's conflict in which one's interests are not aligned. In entrapment, acting in an ally's conflict is solely to preserve the alliance regardless of diverging interests (Snyder, 1984, pp.463-467). This occurs when a weaker state is aligned with a more powerful state; the weaker state's dependency on the alliance far outweighs the cost of fighting for the stronger ally's interests.

3.3 Research Method and Data

Research Method

The research undertaken by this project is primarily qualitative and will employ the use of document analysis as the research method. Document analysis is described by Bowen (2009, p.27) as:

"… a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge."

Document analysis is often combined with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation to breed credibility in the information collected (Eisner, 1991, p.110). Using triangulation, a researcher can reduce potential biases by corroborating findings across a number of sources and datasets that were produced using other qualitative methods. On the other hand, document analysis can be used as a stand-alone research method as well (Bowen, 2009, p.29). Even without using document analysis as part of a mixed method, a researcher can still utilize various documents to triangulate and corroborate information. This approach enhances the credibility of the research.

The method of document analysis was preferred over other qualitative methods, such as discourse analysis, for example, because the latter is a method focused on the way language is used to construct meaning and shape reality. It is a useful tool to study topics such as power or identity (Nielson and Norreklit, 2009, p. 204). Discourse analysis would have been the preferred method of research if this paper was centred around the concept of securitization and the objective being assessing the 'speech acts' that shifted, for example, the region 'Indo-Pacific' into being a referent object.

The research method of document analysis is efficient as it requires data selection and not collection. Documents are easily obtainable through traditional libraries, libraries online, various topic-specific databases, government websites and in print form from the relevant institution. It is a cost-effective method of collecting data. The disadvantages of

document analysis are that documents are produced with a purpose and are independent of the researcher's agenda and, as such, may contain insufficient details. Furthermore, as document analysis is predicated on selection rather than collection, a researcher is susceptible to biased selectivity when considering the documents to include in one's study (Bowen, 2009, pp.3132).

Data

This research paper relied on a number of online databases to source documents to form part of its data set. The online databases that were utilized in this research can be categorized into seven groups: online library databases, news agencies and media outlets, independent Think Tanks, government-sponsored Think Tanks, University Research Centres, government websites, and regional and intergovernmental websites.

A mixed combination of the following keywords was used in these databases to reduce the number of results to the most relevant documents: 'AUKUS', 'AUKUS Treaty', 'Pacific', 'Blue Pacific', 'Pacific Ocean', 'Small Island States', 'South Pacific Region', 'Pacific Region', 'Oceania', 'Australia', 'Securitisation', 'Security Dilemma', 'Entrapment', 'Abandonment', 'Asia-Pacific', 'Asia Pacific', 'Indo-Pacific', 'Indo Pacific', 'Vanuatu', 'Fiji', 'Solomon Islands', 'Papua New Guinea', 'PNG', 'Melanesia', 'Melanesian States'.

As the AUKUS Treaty is a recent development, the number of results that can be generated in relation to it is significantly reduced, being only from 15 September 2021 onwards. Additionally, the filters related to geographical space reduce the amount of literature pertinent to this research paper.

To assess the relationship between Australia and the Pacific Island states, this research had to narrow down the number of countries to be included in the study. There are 14 independent Pacific Island countries in the South Pacific Ocean which is too many

countries to assess for this research paper. The region is divided into three subregions, Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia. The Melanesian States are located in close proximity to Australia and form a large portion of Australia's self-identified 'arc of instability' (Dibb, 1999, p.18).

This was then further narrowed down to four countries within the Melanesian subregion, which are Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and the Fiji Islands. These countries were chosen not only because they have an existing diplomatic and development relationship with Australia but also because they are the only four countries within the Melanesian sub-region that have gained independence. Also included in the Melanesian subregion are West Papua, a province of Indonesia; New Caledonia, a territory of France; and Torres Straits, a territory of Australia.

Each of these four countries' relationships with Australia was assessed by examining each country's development partnership with Australia, its National Security Strategy, current security alliances and analysing the behaviour of both countries in relation to a significant event in the history of their relationship to gage how they behaved or responded to each other. All four of these countries only gained independence after 1970; as such, there are limited recorded diplomatic incidents between each country in which the bilateral and diplomatic relationship between the countries was tested or strained significantly. Studying these incidents was integral to this research as it looked particularly at Australia's approaches to addressing each incident or conflict as the largest traditional aid partner of these Island States.

These incidents are outlined as follows:

1. Vanuatu - period of political instability between 2004 to 2012.
2. Papua New Guinea - Moti Affair in 2006

3. Fiji Islands – 2006 Military Coup

4. Solomon Islands – RAMSI 2003

Australia has identified the stability of the Pacific Islands States as integral to Australia's security. Studying each of these incidents and Australia's response is essential to identifying the tools with which Australia cooperates or exerts its influence over the Island States in pursuit of its interests. The AUKUS Treaty represents a divergence between security priorities between the Pacific and Australia; assessing their relationship, existing security partnerships can inform whether abandonment or entrapment can ensue if geopolitical competition intensifies in the region.

In assessing the relationship between these countries and Australia and using the theoretical framework of the security dilemma and document analysis, this research will identify the security alliances that have been formed since the inception of AUKUS, with which country this alliance is being made and their stance on the AUKUS agreement. This will then inform the political and security implications of AUKUS on these island States.

3.4 Limitations, Biases, and Ethics

Limitations

A fundamental limitation of this research is time; the AUKUS Treaty was announced in September 2021, with another critical announcement occurring in March 2023, which provided details underpinning the cooperation between the US, Australia, and the UK. Given its significance, most States are still grappling with understanding the potential impact of the Treaty, their position in the geostrategic competition sphere and how they would respond to such implications. The focus of research is quite contemporary, and as such, the availability of information, in-depth analysis and development of the phenomenon limits the sources available to this research.

Another critical limitation, as iterated in the literature review of this research paper, is the limited amount of research completed with a 'Pacific' focus concerning AUKUS; a bulk of the research available is 'Asia-focused. This, however, is changing given the significance of the geographic location of the Pacific Islands in this geostrategic contest; however, this again is a matter of the 'time' limitation of this research.

Biases

Qualitative research is subjective in nature, and researchers are integral to the process and final product (Galdas, 2017). It is essential for the researcher to be transparent, reflexive, and critically self-reflective of personal preconceptions, analytic focus, and relationship dynamics (Polit and Beck, 2014). Considering this, this author has been critically reflective of their personal biases concerning every aspect of this research. This author is a Pacific Islander and an indigenous citizen of one of the countries whose diplomatic relationship with Australia is being discussed in this paper. To counter this bias, this author consulted several academic and media sources that described and analysed the diplomatic incidents to ensure that there were no biases in how the incident or event was framed in this research paper.

Ethics

This thesis's research design and methodology are centred around a text-based approach. Therefore, this thesis will not involve any data creation or original research that involves interactions or dialogue with people or experts as a source. The primary ethical consideration for this research paper is to give proper credit to the authors by providing precise citations of ideas that are not the original work or thoughts of the author of this research paper.

Chapter Four
Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an independent Melanesian country and Australia's closest neighbour, located approximately 3.75km apart between their outlying islands. PNG shares a land border with Indonesia's Papua province and gained independence from Australia on September 16, 1975. PNG is a constitutional monarchy with King Charles III as its head of state, represented by Governor General Sir Robert Dadae in the country. The Prime Minister is the head of government elected by Parliament; James Marape currently holds this position (DFAT, n.d.). PNG has a population of approximately 9 million, comprises 600 islands plus PNG mainland and is the world's most linguistically diverse country, with just over 853 known languages. The Ramu mine in PNG's Madang Province is the site of China's most significant single investment in the Pacific, which is US$1.6 billion (Smith et al. 2014, p.6). The country's stability has been affected by civil unrest, riots, tribal fights and, more prominently, a prolonged armed struggle since 1988 by separatist rebels on Bougainville, angry about the Australian-owned mine on the island. The mine has since closed, and
Bougainville is set to gain independence from PNG in 2027 (BBC, 2023).

The current PNG government does not have a detailed foreign policy that underpins its foreign engagement and diplomatic relations with other States except those set by previous governments: 1975 'Friends to All and Enemies to None; 1979 Active and Selective
Engagement; 1985 - 1988 Independent Commitment to International Cooperation; 1992 – 1994 Look North Policy; 1994 -1997 Look North and Work the Pacific; and 1996

Reinforcing our Core Relationship (O'Neill, 2013, pp. 10 – 11). PNG is also a member of the NonAligned Movement (Kaiku, 2018). Kaiku et al. (2022) state that foreign policy is rarely a topic of political debate. Former PNG Minister for Foreign Affairs Justin Tkatchenko highlighted in January 2023 that a foreign policy white paper was high on his priority list and that previous reviews were done but never endorsed and implemented (Kellerton, 2023). Tkatchenko no longer holds the relevant position. As such, PNG is still without a contemporary endorsed foreign policy white paper.

4.1 Australia – PNG's Current Development Partnership

Australia and PNG share a long history, with Australia transitioning its relations into diplomatic engagement after PNG gained independence. Australia is PNG's most significant development partner, and PNG is Australia's second-largest recipient of Official Development Aid after Indonesia (Smith et al. 2014, p.6). The bilateral relationship between the two countries is outlined in the Papua New Guinea - Australia Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership signed in 2020 (DFAT, n.d.). The partnership provides an overarching framework for cooperation in several areas, including but not limited to security, governance, health, climate change and education. The economic partnership between the two countries is quite significant. Australia is PNG's leading bilateral trade partner, with just over A$6 billion in 2020 and investments in PNG valued at approximately A$24.8 billion in 2021. (DFAT, n.d.).

The Australian Government has provided over A$8.24 billion in Official Development Assistance to PNG from 2008 to 2021. This is followed by China, which spent A$1.53 billion, and Japan, which spent A$1.21 billion over the same period (Lowy Institute, 2023).

Australia's ODA to PNG constitutes approximately 54% of the total aid received between

2008 and 2021. Foreign assistance to PNG made up 5.78% of its GDP in 2021 (Lowy Institute, 2023). During this financial period, the Australian government committed an estimated A$616.2 million of its ODA to PNG for the 2023-2024 period (DFAT, n.d.).

4.2 PNG's National Security Strategy

The National Security Policy 2014 – 2021 of PNG was penned in 2013, its first after 38 years (O'Neill, 2013). The NSP places 'people' at the centre of its policy, emphasising the pivot away from the traditional state-centric approach to security (O'Neill, 2013, p.3). This NSP is limited to the date of its publication and assesses its national security environment as being complexed by 'new' challenges such as "terrorism, transnational crime, nuclear proliferation, cyber-attacks, global warming and microbial menaces" (O'Neill, 2013, p. 15).

Internally, the NSP details a number of security threats, from national cohesion, ruralurban migration, and witchcraft to small arms proliferation and people smuggling. In regional and global power dynamics, PNG is to remain neutral but recognises its valuable strategic location in the Asia-Pacific. Strategic alliances and partnerships would be the modality which would guarantee its own security. Although penned in 2013, PNG's NSP geopolitical landscape described is quite contemporary, recognising China and India's rise to superpower status and the US military strategy to rebalance the Asia-Pacific region. The NSP expresses that PNG's geo-strategy and security are impliedly dependent on its strong relationship with the US. Furthermore, PNG defines the Indo-Pacific concept as solely based on maritime security focused on sea lanes of communication that flow through both the Pacific and Indian Oceans. PNG is a significant independent state within the Indo-Pacific construct (O'Neill, 2013, p. 16). According to the NSP, Australia is a considerable security partner, and PNG's national security interests would be enhanced through their

bilateral relationship. Regardless of the detailed NSP, National Security Advisor Reginald Renagi highlighted in April 2023 that the NSP has been surpassed by domestic and geopolitical events since 2019. To maintain relevance, Renagi remarked that a comprehensive strategic review was needed to revise the NSP to aptly provide for the current increasingly complex environment and better align with government policy (Renagi, 2024). On the other hand,

PNG has endorsed and is implementing a 2021 National Cyber Security Policy (Masiu, 2021)

4.3 Strained Diplomatic Relationship

Australia's special relationship with PNG has been the cornerstone of their diplomatic engagement; however, two incidents between 2005 and 2006 strained relations between the two governments. Then Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare, whilst passing through Brisbane Airport, was required to remove his shoes, which he opposed firmly, deeming the request humiliating and disrespectful. This sparked protest marches in PNG to the Australian High Commission, requiring an apology to Somare. Dialogue was initiated between DFAT and PNG over the incident wherein Alexander Downer, then Foreign Minister, remarked that an apology would not be offered (RNZ, 2005).

The following year, 2006, saw the relationship between the two countries worsen over Australian lawyer Julian Moti. In actuality, the Moti affair caused a strain between Australia and both the PNG and Solomon Islands governments. Moti was appointed Attorney General of the Solomon Islands between 2006 and 2007. In 1998, Julian Moti was initially arrested in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on allegations of engaging in sexual relations with a minor; on trial in Vanuatu court, the judge declared there was no case to answer. In June 2006, AFP personnel in Vanuatu took another statement from the victim, now 21, to support a case against Moti under the Child Sex Tourism Act (SMH, 2006). The appointment of

Moti as Attorney General in Solomons was opposed by Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, citing the sexual offences committed in Vanuatu. Attempts to have Moti extradited to Australia from the Solomon Islands were thwarted by its Prime Minister Sogavare. Still, in 2006, while visiting PNG, Australia again failed to have Moti extradited and escaped PNG in a clandestine flight back to the Solomon Islands. A no-confidence vote against Sogavare in November 2007 saw the Prime Minister replaced by Derek Sikua, who granted the deportation of Moti to Australia. (Nautilus, n.d.). Appearing before the High Court in Australia in 2011, Moti was cleared as the proceedings constituted an abuse of process (RNZ, 2017).

Following Moti's escape from PNG in 2006, Australia suspended Ministerial contacts with PNG, barred PNG Prime Minister Somare from visiting Australia and cancelled the ministerial forum between the countries at the end of the same year. Foreign Minister Downer highlighted that governance was an issue in some areas of the Pacific (SMH, 2006). Somare accused Australia of orchestrating the Moti affair to discredit him and refused to table reports by the Ombudsman and the PNG Defence Force implicating Somare in Moti's escape from PNG (RNZ, 2007). Conversely, newly appointed Foreign Affairs of PNG Minister Paul
Teinsten remarked that he committed to restoring relations between the two countries after the Moti affair (ABC News, 2006). However, Australia stated that the complete restoration of diplomatic relations depended on the published PNG Defence Report and the prosecution of those responsible. Tiensten responded that the inquiry was set up for PNG and not to quell anyone else (RNZ, 2007). In December 2007, newly appointed Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd met with Somare and mutually agreed to end the diplomatic freeze (Nicolson and Forbes, 2007).

Declassified official documents in 2010 uncovered a deliberate effort to ruin Moti's career due to fears that Moti would negatively impact the bilateral relationship between the Solomon Islands and Australia while serving as Attorney General in 2006 due to his opposition to the

2003 intervention in the Solomon Islands and Anti-Australian views. The Head of Australia's Mission in the Solomon Islands had wanted to use the sex charges to prevent Moti's appointment (Flitton, 2010). In 2017, Australia apologised to Moti for the unlawful extradition from the Solomon Islands in 2007 and paid an undisclosed amount in compensation (RNZ, 2017).

The Australian Government initiated known unlawful proceedings to protect interests in the Solomon Islands, consequently straining its relationships with PNG. Australia then attempted to leverage its suspended relationship with PNG to force the latter into indicting its own Government officials, potentially creating instability in the Government. This also constitutes an interference in the internal affairs of PNG.

4.4 Security Alliances and Partnerships

Australia and PNG entered a legally binding bilateral security agreement in 2023 (DFAT, 2023). The agreement would see cooperation on a broad spectrum of shared security interests, including but not limited to national security, maritime and border security, climate change, UN peacekeeping operations, policing, and infrastructure. The agreement also allows each party to request assistance from the other in relation to any threat or security-related matter affecting peace, stability, or sovereignty.

PNG also concluded a Defence Cooperation Agreement and an Agreement Concerning Counter Illicit Transnational Maritime Activity Operations with the United States in May 2023 (U.S. Mission in PNG, 2023). These agreements mark a significant step for the US and PNG's bilateral relationship. The DCA will modernise their security partnership,

enhancing cooperation, bolstering the PNGDF, and promoting regional stability. The

maritime agreement will address a range of maritime threats, including IUU fishing, drug

trafficking, and migrant smuggling. It will enable PNG to participate in the U.S. Coast

Guard's Shiprider program, strengthen maritime enforcement capabilities, and promote good

regional naval governance. The agreements enhance the partnership between the United

States and Papua New Guinea and promote security cooperation while upholding

democratic values. The agreement further grants the US unimpeded access to six mutually

agreed facilities, ports, and airports in Papua New Guinea, including the Australian-

developed Lombrum Naval Base on

Manus Island. These facilities may even be designated for exclusive use by US forces.
Additionally, the DCA allows US forces to use these facilities for transits, refuelling,

equipment pre-positioning, and force deployment. As is common in such agreements, the

US will exercise exclusive criminal jurisdiction over its personnel (Storey, 2023). The

security agreement is concerning given PNG's neighbour Solomon Islands' security pact

with China.

Chapter Five
The Fiji
Islands

The Republic of Fiji is an independent Melanesian country that gained

independence from the United Kingdom on October 10, 1970. It is located 4,635km from

Australia and approximately 5000km from the US State of Hawaii. Due to its central

location, Fiji is known as the hub of the Pacific and boasts one of the most developed

Pacific economies (DFAT

n.d.). This is evident in its membership in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for

Prosperity, in which it is considered a founding member (Albanese, 2023). Fiji's foreign

policy engagement is predicated on sovereignty and collaboration with all UN Member

States for sustainable world peace, substantive justice, and respect for human rights and

dignity (Bainimarama, 2010, p.2). Fiji is a strong advocate of the impacts of climate change

on Pacific Island nations. Fiji was subjected to three military coups and one civilian coup:

two military coups in 1987 by current Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, a 2006 military coup

by

Former Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, and a civilian coup in 2000 by George Speight.

Fiji became the most recent member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 2011 (Kububola,

2012), whilst under a military-led government, three years before restoring democracy in

2014.

5.1 Australia – Fiji's Current Development Partnership

Australia is Fiji's largest bilateral development aid partner. The bilateral engagement
between

Australia and Fiji is driven by the Fiji – Australia Vuvale[2] Partnership, signed in October

2023 (DFAT, 2023). This partnership stipulates five pillars of cooperation, which are:

1. The strengthening of people-to-people links

2. Economic relationship enhancement

3. Security cooperation enhancement

4. Cooperation on regional and international issues

5. Enabling sustainable human development.

The bilateral partnership agreement also specifies that both countries acknowledge that

climate change is central to their cooperation as it is their most significant shared threat and

commits to providing leadership on regional security through regional bodies in line with

the Boe Declaration on Regional Security (DFAT, 2023, p.3).

  The Australian Government has provided over A$1.02 billion in Official

Development Assistance to Fiji from 2008 to 2021. This is followed by China, which spent

A$528.83 million, Japan, which spent A$454.86 million, and NZ, which spent 283.81

million over the same period (Lowy Institute, 2023). In 2021 alone, foreign aid to Fiji

comprised only 3.95% of its GDP. Meanwhile, Australia's ODA budget estimate for Fiji for

2023-2024 is A$88.1 million (DFAT, n.d.).

5.2 Fiji's National Security Strategy

  The Fiji Government is developing its National Security Strategy, which is yet to be

tabled in Parliament. Military Commander Kalouniwai remarks that the Republic of Fiji

Military Force (RFMF) has a strategic plan in place that precedes the National Security

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2 Vuvale – the Fijian term for 'Family'

Strategy, which must be reviewed once the latter is approved by Parliament (Anthony, 2023). Fiji's security and defence requirements were last reviewed in 2004, which resulted in a draft

White Paper authored by the Ministry of Home Affairs but was never approved by Parliament. A military coup was initiated in December 2006 to impede the approval of this White Paper as it recommended, amongst other things, a significant reduction in RFMF size (Tarte, n.d.). This author has been unsuccessful in being able to access the document on RFMF and Government websites. The document has also not been subjected to any published critical reviews.

5.3 Strained Diplomatic Relationship

Australia and Fiji have had a long diplomatic history that became strained in 2006 following the military coup orchestrated by former Prime Minister Commodore Frank Bainimarama ousting then Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase. The coup resulted from disagreements between the military and the Fijian Government. On December 5, military commander Bainimarama stated that the Vice-President was being hindered from exercising his constitutional prerogative to dismiss Qarase, and due to this, utilising the doctrine of necessity, Bainimarama appointed himself as President (Fraenkel, 2009, p. 43).

The Australian Government had three warships within Fiji's territorial waters without authorisation as tensions escalated between the Military and the Fiji Government. Prime Minister John Howard revealed that the warships were supposedly present to evacuate

Australian nationals if necessary. Fiji's military command condemned Australia's use of the Biketawa Declaration to 'invade' Fiji (RNZ, 2007), and all new covert security personnel who had recently arrived in Suva were to be treated as mercenaries (ABC News, 2006). Australian Prime Minister John Howard stated that Qarase had requested to commit troops

to assist in quelling the situation in Fiji, an intervention. Still, he had declined the requests, not wanting to place Australian lives at risk. It should be noted that no lives were lost in the 2006 takeover (Reuters, 2007).

Commander Bainimarama had made demands of the Fijian Government in the month following the military takeover, providing three weeks for their compliance. The demands were to withdraw three controversial bills[3] in Parliament, to publicly drop the sedition charges

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laid against Bainimarama by Fiji Police Commander Andrew Hughes, an Australian Federal Police, and to account for the RFMF views on renewing Hughes' contract. In the aftermath of the 2000 coup, the Qarase Government appointed the ADF, which selected Hughes as Police Commander. The position had no citizenship requirements, and as such, his appointment was within the confines of Fijian Laws. Allegedly, it was the charges of sedition against the Commander that triggered the December coup (Fraenkel, 2009, p.47). Apart from these demands, it was established knowledge that the Qarase Government and former governments engaged in corrupt practices whilst in office in state-owned institutions, immigration departments, government tendering processes, and engagement with foreign investors. Bainimarama and the RFMF collected all documents and hard drives as evidence and requested 'forensic accountants' from the Governments of Australia and the UK to assist in a national audit; the proposed request was refused (Fraenkel, 2009, p.50).

Bainimarama ceded the Presidency to Ratu Josefa Iloilo in January 2007, who endorsed the military's actions before formally appointing Commander Bainimarama as

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[3] The Qoliqoli Bill would transfer beach, lagoon, and reef property rights from the Government to indigenous Fijians, which would allow them to levy fees against hotel owners to access but also the Fijian popula on

interim Prime Minister (Fiji Village, 2007). In November 2009, Bainimarama expelled both

the Australian High Commissioner James Batley and New Zealand Envoy Todd Cleaver

from Fiji, citing alleged engagement tactics intended to undermine the Fijian judiciary. The

Chief Justice of Fiji, Anthony Gates, had recruited seven Sri Lankan judges who were

approached by Australian authorities, informing them of the doubt surrounding the integrity

and independence of the judiciary in Fiji (Meritt and Walters, 2009). Fiji was suspended

from the

Commonwealth of Nations (The Commonwealth, 2014) and the Pacific Islands Forum

(PIFS, 2009, p.11) in the same year for failing to meet demands to hold a democratic

general election.

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whose livelihood was dependent on access to the sea. The Reconcilia on, Tolerance, and Unity Bill was aimed
at gran ng amnesty to the civilian coup perpetrators of 2000 and compensa on payments for vic ms.

Prior to the expelling of the Australian High Commissioner to Fiji, the High

Commission published a press release confirming the suspension of Fiji from the

Commonwealth and its ineligibility to receive technical assistance from the same; Australia

stated that it would continue to support Fiji through its development assistance program

(Australian High Commission Fiji, 2009). Australia imposed sanctions on Fiji in 2007,

including travel bans on the interim government members and discouraging non-essential

travel for Australians to Fiji. Australia also redirected aid away from Fiji's ministries

(Schmaliohann, 2014) and suspension of the Defence Cooperation (O'Keefe, 2023).

In addition to reducing its ODA and activities in Fiji, Australia and New Zealand

influenced the Asian Development Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction

and Development to hold off on any new loans to the country (Schmaliohann, 2014).

Australia and the international community's intentions were to exert pressure on Fiji to

revert to democracy. Still, these efforts bore inverse consequences when Fiji turned to China for support, and the latter increased its presence in the region. China accounted for 75% of the

US$63 million in non-traditional aid to Fiji, with a sharp increase in loans provided to Fiji by China's Exim Bank (Schmaliohann, 2014). China maintained its support to Fiji throughout the seven years of Bainimarama's military interim government. Bainimarama's authoritarian rule brought stability, development, and economic growth (BBC, 2014).

Australia removed all its sanctions in 2014 following Fiji's democratic elections in which Bainimarama party, Fiji First, secured more than half of the 50 seats of Parliament retaining his Prime Ministership. Bilateral relations between Fiji and Australia did not commence until 2018, as the former expressed disinterest in returning to its traditional partnership with the latter. In 2017, Fiji declined the PACER Plus Agreement, a trade agreement granting Australia and New Zealand greater access to the region's markets to the detriment of Fiji's markets. Fiji subsequently joined Beijing the following month to support China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Herr, 2018). As the 'Hub of the Pacific', Fiji's strategic location would be most advantageous for China's BRI. China became a significant partner when Fiji was isolated from the regional and international community, and the reintroduction of traditional partners would require a balancing act between itself, Fiji and China.

5.4 Security Alliances and Partnerships

In 2022, Fiji elected new Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka after the third successful democratic election after the 2006 military coup. In an interview with an ABC News reporter in Fiji, Lice Movono (2022), Rabuka highlighted that his government is receptive to continuing partnerships with China due to its approach to Fiji purely as a development partner. In contrast, traditional partners in Australia (including New Zealand, the US, and

the UK) see Fiji and the Pacific as colonial outposts for their strategic interests. They must reorient their perspective on the Pacific Island States as sovereign and equal partners.

Fiji has been deepening its security cooperation with China since 2011, underpinned by a Police Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This allowed Chinese police officers to be stationed in Fiji and vice-versa; joint-police operations, communication and surveillance equipment and anti-riot equipment were provided. The MOU has now been made obsolete by Rabuka's government and has not been renewed. Fiji also, through its former Prime Minister Bainimarama, rejected China's proposed multilateral security and trade pact in 2022 (Sousa-Santos and Powles, 2023).

Fiji has diversified its cooperation on security matters by signing partnerships in areas of security, economic resilience and protecting shared interests bilaterally with Australia in 2023 (Reuters 2023; Mann and Maykin 2022), New Zealand in 2022 (Reuters, 2022), United Kingdom also in 2022 (British High Commission, 2022) and France in 2023 (Uluwai, 2023).

However, Rabuka has confirmed that Fiji continues to support Beijing's BRI firmly and its vision for global security through its Global Security Initiative (GSI). The GSI aims to establish a diplomatic and security framework through multilateral treaties, alliances, and institutions (Lee and Needham, 2023).

Prime Minister Rabuka is the first Pacific Island leader to express support for the AUKUS Treaty, to the apparent shock of its Pacific counterparts, who have openly condemned the Treaty and its nuclear aspirations (Braddock, 2023). Rabuka stated that as Fiji was neither part of the planning nor a party to the agreement, his government could not prevent the treaty but hoped it would enhance peace. Rabuka, however, did not endorse a military build-up in the Pacific nor increased military cooperation with the United States (McGuirk, 2023).

The RFMF and the United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) jointly hosted the annual Chiefs of Defence Conference (CHODS) in Fiji in August 2023. The theme was "Preserving the Rules-Based Order to Enable Sovereignty in an Era of Strategic Competition" (U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, 2023). CHODs is an annual event attended by senior military personnel across the Indo-Pacific since 1998 and aims to enhance cooperation. Previously known as the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), it announced a name change to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in May 2018 to recognise the increasing connectivity between the two oceans (U.S. Pacific Command, 2018). In his opening remarks at CHODs, RFMF

Commander Major General Jone Kalouniwai had stated that:

> "This meeting symbolises the RFMF's dedication to being at the forefront of proactive engagement, where open dialogue and mutual respect converge to build bridges towards lasting peace and stability. Together, through our shared commitment and joint efforts, we aim to fortify the foundations of a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region."

The RFMF Commander's statement and recognition of the 'Indo-Pacific' as a region to be secured create uncertainty on whether, in using the terminology, Fiji shares Australia and the US's containment strategy for China. Sousa-Santos and Powles (2023) argued that Rabuka's government is increasingly demonstrating an alignment on security matters with its traditional partners. This is evident from the geopolitical shift from China to its security and defence partnerships with Australia, New Zealand, the US, France, and the UK.

Chapter Six
The Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands is an independent Melanesian country located 3280km

northeast of Australia. The Solomon Islands is a constitutional monarchy with King Charles

III as the

President, represented in-country by Governor General Sir David Vunagi, a Solomon

Islander. The Prime Minister is the head of government elected by Parliament; Manasseh

Sogavare currently holds this position. The Solomon Islands gained independence from the

United Kingdom on July 7, 1978. The country's stability has been affected by several key

events: tensions with Papua New Guinea in 1988 regarding separatist rebels entering

Solomons territory; the 1998 to 2003 crisis of violent ethnic tensions; the 2006 burning of

Chinatown in Honiara; and violent riots against Sogavare in 2021 (BBC, 2023). Solomons'

foreign policy engagement is predicated on fostering democratic principles, human rights,

and effective global governance while also supporting the development and security of the

Solomon Islands. This will be accomplished by working closely with the United Nations,

international organizations, and donor partners. Specific goals include achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the Solomon Islands, enhancing collaborations

with the EU and other international organizations, exploring South-South cooperation

opportunities, improving bilateral cooperation and border management, and establishing

bilateral Technical

Cooperation partnerships (MFAET, n.d.). The Solomon Islands is not a member of the Non-

Aligned Movement.

6.1 Australia – Solomon Islands Current Development Partnership

Australia established diplomatic relations with the Solomons when it gained

independence. Australia is the largest bilateral development aid partner for the country. This

bilateral relationship is underpinned by Australia's support for the implementation of

Solomons 'National Development Strategy 2016 – 2035 (MDPAC, 2016), which is aligned

with the Sustainable Development Goals and Partnerships for Recover: Australia's

COVID19 Development Response (DFAT, n.d.). The NDS is focused on promoting

sustainable and inclusive economic growth, creating opportunities for all Solomon

Islanders. This includes alleviating poverty, improving food security, ensuring a sustainable

environment, and providing access to quality social services, infrastructure, and utilities

(MDPAC, 2016).

The Australian Government has provided over A$3.28 billion in Official

Development Assistance to the Solomon Islands from 2008 to 2021. This is followed by

New Zealand, which spent A$458.27 million; Japan, which spent A$340.57 million;

Taiwan, which spent A$150.13 million; and China, which spent A$150.12 million over the

same period (Lowy Institute, 2023). Australia's ODA to the Solomon Islands constitutes

61% of the total aid received between 2008 and 2021. Foreign aid to the Solomon Islands

comprised 16.58% of its GDP in 2021 (Lowy Institute, 2023). Presently, the Australian

Government has committed an estimated A$171.3 million of its ODA to the Solomon

Islands for the 2023 – 2024 period (DFAT, n.d.).

6.2 Solomon Islands National Security Strategy

As a member of the Pacific Island Forum and in alignment with the 2018 Boe

Declaration, 2002 Nasonini Declaration and the 2014 Biketawa Treaty, the Solomon Islands

endorsed its first National Security Strategy in October 2020 (MPNSCS, 2020). The key

national security pillars are sovereignty, government, economy, people and society, and

environment. This is then broken down into 13 national security goals, from the formation

of a national security and defence force to responding to crises and climate change. In assessing the country's security environment, the NSS outlines 17 external and internal threats. Climate Change is identified as the principal risk to the country. Followed by other security risks such as but not limited to health, foreign interference, border security, ethnic conflicts, transnational crime, cyber threats, terrorism, land disputes, political and social instability, pests, corruption, unemployment, environment, economy, the influx of foreigners and limited development. The NSS recognises that the global and regional security environment is becoming more complex but identifies its response to this changing environment through its support of the PIF declarations and the United Nations Treaties to which it is a party and ratified (MPNSCS, 2020, p.10).

Solomon's Prime Minister Sogavare ignited national and international concern when he declared in July 2023 that he sought to establish a national force in the Solomons, which is in line with the NSS's first goal. Sogavare remarked that his intentions were to eliminate the Solomon Islands' dependency on external security arrangements. Tidwell et al. (2023) argued that the country has not experienced an external security threat since the 1988 Bougainville conflict. Furthermore, the new military force would have to compete with the country's already under-resourced police force and functional ineffective institutional and governance capacity. Tidwell et al. (2023) recognise that there are significant gaps in the country's security; however, the creation of a national military would not address these gaps. Australia, on the other hand, through its Defence Minister Richard Marles, declared keen support for Sogavare's initiative as this opens another avenue in which Australia and its allies could engage to respond to common security threats and provide a channel for partnership (Tidwell et al., 2023).

6.3 Diplomatic Relationship – Intervention

Australia's bilateral relationship with the Solomon Islands was fortified by Australia's

14-year-long presence in Honiara[4] through the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon

Islands (RAMSI) or Operation Helpem Fren[5], which began in July 2003 and closed in 2017.

The RAMSI Treaty was established under the Biketawa Declaration of 2000 and agreed to

by the Leaders of PIF. The treaty enabled an Australian-led intervention into the Solomon

Islands consisting of members of the police and military force of Australia and PIF member

countries. This was in response to then Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza's request for

urgent international assistance to respond to the violent instability in Honiara. The mission

was funded by Australia, New Zealand, and PIF members. Australia provided the largest

funding into RAMSI at approximately US$2.6 billion (Hayward-Jones, 2014, pg.2).   The

Solomon Islands is made up of over 992 islands and, at the time, had a population of

560,000 people across nine ethnically and culturally diverse provinces. Violence erupted in

early 1998 in Guadalcanal province, where Honiara is located, when traditional landowners

were fuelled by resentment for immigrants from the province of Malaita settling in the

province in search of employment opportunities. The province established the Guadalcanal

Revolutionary Army, which terrorised and killed Malaitans, forcing them back to Malaita.

In response, the Malaita Eagle Force was formed to protect Malaitans, which escalated

violence, causing several hundred deaths. (Leith, 2011, p.156)

   With the assistance of Australia and New Zealand as mediators in October 2000, the

Townsville Peace Agreement was agreed to by both factions; however, at this time, the

violence had spread to other provinces resulting in widespread civil unrest, lawlessness, and

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[4] Capital city of Solomon Islands
[5] 'Helpem Fren' is a phrase in Pijin* meaning 'Help a Friend'.
Pijin is one of the main languages used in the Solomon Islands and is similar to Vanuatu's Bislama language, of which this author is a na ve speaker.

economic decline. There was general fear in the region that the Solomon Islands would become a failed state. The country sits in Australia's 'arc of instability' and could serve as a haven for terrorists, transnational criminals, and organized crime, directly affecting Australia and the security of the region (Hayward-Jones, 2014, pg.7).

With lessons learned from its interventions in Bougainville and Timor-Leste, Australia provided a diplomat, Nick Warner, to lead the intervention, emphasising policing and light military footprint by Australia's Defence Force. The mission mandate, as endorsed by PIF, was to address societal turmoil and lawlessness, economic deterioration, corruption, and a severe decrease in service provision and government administrative standards (RAMSI, n.d.). By November 2003, RAMSI had successfully restored order removing 3700 weapons, charging militants, and arresting 773 people (Ride, 2023). The initial success of RAMSI was in its multilateral approach incorporating personnel from across the Pacific to respond to the events in Honiara. RAMSI assisted in stabilising the public finances of the Solomons government and in creating an environment which saw the return of foreign investment and the progress of business in Honiara (Hayward-Jones, 2014, pg.7).

In July 2013, RAMSI shifted its focus to being a police-only mission incorporating development elements into the mission aligning with the bilateral aid program of both Australia and New Zealand (Hayward-Jones, 2014, pg.2). Ride (2023) argued that in shifting its focus to governance, RAMSI became "an intensive state capacity building program". There was little success in assisting the public sector to improve capacity and accountability, with local politicians constantly undermining the rule of law. The original mandate of RAMSI did not consist of a political pillar, and any assistance rendered in building accountability would be lost as it had no reform mandates and local politicians were not prepared to drive these reforms (Hayward-Jones 2014, p.16).

There were too many complexities within the Solomon Islands that undermined the efforts of RAMSI and other organisations, and this would consequently affect the country's long-term stability and security (Leith 2011, p. 162). Australia's investment into RAMSI was disproportionate to Australia's interests in Solomons, and due to its lack of an exit strategy, and aid ineffectiveness, it transformed the Solomon Islands into an aid-dependent country (Hayward-Jones 2014, p.17).

6.4 Security Alliances

On 14 August 2017, Australia and the Solomon Islands signed a security agreement that allows Australia to rapidly deploy police, defence, and other relevant personnel to the Solomon Islands if both countries agree. This bilateral agreement covers a wide range of potential security threats, including natural disasters, and allows third-party countries to contribute. It is Australia's first direct security agreement with a Pacific country and replaces the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands agreement, which ended after RAMSI's withdrawal on June 30, 2017 (DFAT, n.d.). This bilateral agreement will only cease upon the agreement of both parties in writing.

In April 2022, the Solomon Islands signed a security cooperation agreement with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare announced the signing in Parliament and emphasized that the decision is in line with the country's National Security Strategy (NSS). Sogavare urged neighbouring countries and partners to respect the Solomon Islands' sovereignty and assured them that the agreement would not harm regional peace and stability. The security cooperation with China is purportedly guided by the country's 'Friends to all and Enemies to none' foreign policy and is not aimed at any specific country or alliance.

Sogavare remarked that the security alliance complements the alliance brokered with

Australia in 2017 and is in compliance with the Solomon Islands' commitment to the Biketawa Declaration and the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. He concluded his statement by stating that the stability of the Solomon Islands is essential for regional stability (GBU Press, 2022). Solomon's alliance with China does not cover any sort of military base in the Solomons but allows military personnel and ship visits to the Solomons on agreement.

The Labor Party in Australia deemed the Solomon Islands' security alliance with China to be the "biggest foreign policy failure in the Pacific" (Hooton, 2022). This failure is premised on the fact that Australia continues to fail to address climate change more effectively, and this is reducing its leverage in a region that has repeatedly identified climate change as its biggest threat. Australia is attempting to remedy this by offering to update its security alliance with the Solomon Islands to reflect the more contemporary issues affecting the country (Tillett, 2023). Sogavare is taking full advantage of the strategic contest between Australia and its allies with China to his country's benefit.

In relation to AUKUS, however, the Solomon Islands have neither rejected nor publicly supported the treaty despite meeting with Prime Minister Scott Morrison. Sogavare has been outspoken on the issue of Australia's lack of consultations with its 'Pacific Family' regarding AUKUS and having the region learn of the broad-reaching treaty in the media.

Sogavare stated that his government will not play any part in the militarisation of the Pacific (Needham and Cameron-Moore, 2022), a remark that seemingly addresses not only AUKUS but accusations from other states regarding its alliance with China.

Chapter Seven

The Republic of Vanuatu

The Republic of Vanuatu is an island nation in the South Pacific Ocean located 1750km east of Australia. On gaining independence on 30 July 1980 from Britain and France, Vanuatu's first Prime Minister, Father Walter Lini, set the crucial foundations for Vanuatu's foreign policy engagement, which was predicated on anti-colonialism, support for independence movements and non-alignment (Tanham and Wainstein, 1989, p.30. Vanuatu has not deviated significantly from these foreign policy foundations despite introducing new governments or creating new diplomatic ties with other countries. The bilateral diplomatic relationship between Australia and Vanuatu is predicated on "… shared values, church and community links, and mutual respect" (DFAT, n.d.).

7.1 Australia – Vanuatu Development Partnership

Australia is Vanuatu's largest bilateral development partner, providing Official Development Assistance in the sum of A$1.06 billion between 2008 and 2021 (Lowy Institute, 2023). This was followed by China's A$490.28 million, New Zealand's A$361.71 million, and Japan's A$275.27 million over the same period. In 2021 alone, foreign aid accounted for 21.76% of Vanuatu's GDP (Lowy Institute, 2023). Australia's ODA total estimated commitment for 2023 to 2024 is A$84.6 million (DFAT, n.d.). The Australian Government development programs in Vanuatu are guided by several strategic documents of which Australia is supporting implementation:

1. Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030

2. Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response

3. Vanuatu's COVID-19 Development Response Plan
4. Tropical Cyclone Harold response strategy

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5. Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020-2023

6. Yumi Evriwan Tugeta[6] (July 2020)

Australia and Vanuatu share a strong development partnership that spans diverse areas, including establishing effective governance systems and institutions, improving education and healthcare, enhancing natural disaster response capabilities, and tackling the COVID-19 pandemic (DFAT, n.d.).

7.2 Vanuatu's National Security Strategy

In 2021, the Vanuatu Government endorsed and published its first-ever National Security Strategy (Vanuatu Government, 2021). The strategy identifies Vanuatu's security environment as complex and dynamic, shaped by four key factors: the country's vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change, a small economy heavily reliant on tourism and agriculture, increasing geopolitical tensions in the region perpetuated by China and the US, and non-traditional security threats such as but not limited to cybercrime, transnational crime, money laundering, and terrorism.

The key priorities for Vanuatu's security are the protection of national sovereignty, ensuring border security, safeguarding maritime resources, and enhancing human security. On a regional level, the National Security Strategy is aligned with the Pacific Island Forum's 2014 Framework of Pacific Regionalism, the 2014 Biketawa Treaty and the 2018 Boe

Declaration (Vanuatu Government, 2021, p.12). At a global level, this Strategy aligns with the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals and directly addresses the 2014 objectives

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[6] Yumi Evriwan Tugeta – Bislama* word meaning 'All of us, together'.
*Bislama (Pidgin-English) is one of the na onal languages of Vanuatu, of which this author is a na ve speaker.

under the UN-supported Small Islands Developing States Accelerated Modality of Action (Vanuatu Government, 2021, p.13).

It is reiterated in the Strategy that Australia holds a crucial role as Vanuatu's primary security partner, which can be attributed to its influential position as a significant development ally and leading power in the Pacific Islands (Hayward-Jones, 2015, p.67). Additionally, the Strategy identifies other significant security partners, such as New Zealand, France, China, and the US (Vanuatu Government, 2021, p.26). With Australia as a principal partner, the Strategy does not align with Australia's view on regional security nor mentions the Indo-Pacific, opting for concepts of 'Pacific Regionalism' and 'Pacific Region' instead. The Strategy does not mention China and the US directly but, at specific points, refers to increasing complexity within the region due to strategic competition for influence.

7.3 Asymmetrical Diplomatic Relationship

However, the diplomatic relationship between Australia and Vanuatu has been relatively cordial, with only a few incidents marring cooperation. The three incidents outlined below depict the asymmetrical power relationship between Vanuatu and Australia. The incidents also highlighted Australia's interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign country by threatening the suspension of development assistance to the islands to ensure the compliance of its development partner. These incidents also highlight Vanuatu's aid dependency and the sovereignty it must cede in certain instances to appease its aid development partner.

1. Vanuatu's Foreign Minister Barak Sope provided 14 days for the removal of two Australian Federal Police (AFP) advisers and two Australian civilian advisers who were attached to the State Law Office on 1 September 2004. Minister Sope had

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accused the AFP advisers of interfering with domestic politics and spying while carrying out their roles in Vanuatu. The AFP Advisers departed from Port Vila on 15 September 2004. However, on 7 September 2004, the Australian Government threatened to reduce its foreign assistance program to Vanuatu, valued at A$31 million. Vanuatu's Prime Minister at the time, Serge Vohor, permitted the return of the AFP advisers on 16 September 2004 (Gaglioti 2004; IMF 2005). Their return was contingent on a clear definition of their roles and the offices they would occupy, which was to be outlined in a formal agreement (ABC News, 2004).

2. During a visit to Taiwan on 3 November 2004, Prime Minister Serge Vohor, without the Council of Ministers' approval, established diplomatic relations with Taiwan potentially to offset the A$20 million cut in financial assistance from Australia. China immediately ceased its foreign aid to Vanuatu, whilst the Prime Minister dismissed his Foreign Minister, Barak Sope, for creating discord within the Council of Ministers to oppose establishing relations with Taiwan. The Australian Government issued an ultimatum to the Vanuatu Government through visiting diplomats on 26 November 2004. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer threatened to freeze all its foreign assistance to Vanuatu if the government did not change its policies on corruption, transparency, and its recognition of the 'one China' policy (Sydney Morning Herald, 2004). The Prime Minister was adamant in his stance, refusing to adhere to what he described as 'blackmail' by the Australian Government. The Prime Minister was ousted in December 2004, and the new Prime Minister, Ham Lini, reinstated Vanuatu's relationship with Australia a week later when Australia's Foreign Minister amended his Pacific Tour itinerary to include Vanuatu (Gaglioti, 2004). Lini commented to the press that Australia's threat to

suspend aid and Vanuatu's valued relationship with Australia were pivotal factors in removing Vohor as Prime Minister (Gaglioti, 2004).

3. A diplomatic row ensued in May 2012, which saw the Vanuatu Government order the closure of the AFP liaison office in Port Vila and the removal of all its officers from the country within 24 hours. This was in response to the AFP's disrespectful treatment

of Vanuatu's Prime Minister, Sato Kilman, at Sydney International Airport in April 2012. The AFP misled the Prime Minister and his entourage into completing immigration and customs clearances while transiting through the airport. The AFP intended to have the Prime Minister's entourage on Australian soil to detain the Prime Minister's private secretary, Clarence Marae, on an allegation of an international tax scam. The expelling of AFP personnel concerned the 'disrespect' for Vanuatu's Prime

Minister and not related to the arrest of his Private Secretary, as clarified by Vanuatu's Foreign Minister, Alfred Carlot (ABC News, 2012). Again, Vanuatu was warned by Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr that Vanuatu would be losing out on valuable aid should the AFP personnel be forced to leave the country. A year later, AFP personnel were allowed to return to Vanuatu after a brief discussion between governments and pending the signing of a new police cooperation agreement (ABC News, 2013).

7.4 Security Alliances

Despite the diplomatic incidents between the two countries, specifically about AFP personnel, Vanuatu and Australia have a long history of cooperation around security and defence as it relates to national and not regional security. However, the latter would be the purpose of Australia's engagement in Vanuatu in this aspect. Security engagement between

the two countries is guided by PIF's 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security, which commits members to developing national security strategies and strengthening their national security capacity through training (PIF, 2018). Ongoing capacity-building efforts occur within the Vanuatu Police Force and the Vanuatu Mobile Force. These efforts include joint police patrol training and community engagement programs. Additionally, the Defence Cooperation Program in Vanuatu contributes to disaster preparedness and response capacity by upgrading the national emergency radio network throughout Vanuatu (DFAT, n.d.). The AFP has placed advisers within the Police and Military force to ensure ongoing support. In the Maritime sphere, under the Pacific Maritime Security Program, Australia gifted the Government of Vanuatu a Guardian-class Patrol Boat, RVS Takuare, in 2021, replacing the Patrol Boat Australia had gifted in 1987' RVS Tukoro. Subsequently, Australia redeveloped and handed over the Mala Base Wharf in 2022 and is expected to complete the Cooks and Tiroas Barracks Redevelopment project, the country's main military barracks (Australian High Commission, 2022).

Without a security agreement, Australian and Vanuatu police, military, and defence personnel conduct several joint exercises over Vanuatu's maritime boundary and community patrols on land. Since the incidents of 2004 and 2012 concerning AFP personnel, the relationship between the countries about this aspect of development has been mutually beneficial and without controversy.

Security Alliances

In a bid to advance US Strategic interests in the Pacific by accumulating support for its Indo-Pacific Strategy to contain China, Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong signed a Bilateral Security Agreement together with Vanuatu's Prime Minister Ishmael Kalsakau on 13 December 2022 (Braddock, 2023). The security alliance intended to deepen the security relationship between Vanuatu and Australia on shared security interests. The document does

not mention Australia or the US's Indo-Pacific Strategy as a shared security interest to be shared with Vanuatu. The document, however, outlines joint coordinated bilateral and multilateral security exercise operations to support national and regional security interests. The alliance does not allude to the specific region to which these security interests pertain and the other parties that would potentially form the multilateral aspect of these exercises. This security alliance would also enhance regional and multilateral maritime cooperation initiatives. Essentially, the alliance would require Vanuatu to expedite the approval of any requests by Australia for its vessels or aircraft to enter Vanuatu, including Australian personnel. The alliance goes further to grant the Australian Federal Police and the Australian

Defence Force powers to use force as it deems necessary to achieve the purpose of the Security Assistance and shall grant personnel immunity in relation to these activities.   The Bilateral Security Alliance is vaguely worded, and the phrase "enhanced strategic engagement" provides Australia and its allies with a vast scope of activities it can engage in within Vanuatu's territorial boundaries. Although the alliance can be considered a strategic win for Australia as Vanuatu's military partner of choice, it is at odds with Vanuatu's foreign policy of non-alignment and neutrality in the Pacific. Subject to concerns being raised by other development partners, the Kalsakau Government announced that the bilateral security agreement was still subject to Parliament's review process (McDonnell, 2023). Prime Minister Kalsakau was subjected to a 'no confidence' vote, citing foreign relations and the bilateral security alliance with Australia as critical factors in losing confidence in Kalsakau (McDonell, 2023). Again, the diplomatic relationship between the two countries and diverging foreign policy and security interests Australia's interests have had a destabilising effect on the Government of Vanuatu.

The relationship between Vanuatu and its critical development and security partner has resulted from long-term engagement in the islands. Australia continues its development program in Vanuatu to maintain its influence and reduce China's engagement in significant redevelopment projects of Government assets such as Patrol boats, Military wharves, Military Barracks, and joint training initiatives. The asymmetrical power relationship between Australia and Vanuatu is made apparent in the ultimatums substantiated by the suspense of aid provided by Australia to Vanuatu when the latter reinforces its sovereignty. As Vanuatu's largest aid donor, Australia has a significant influence in Vanuatu, whether through interference in domestic affairs or the destabilisation of the Government when asserting its security interests in the country. All these suggest that the relationship between the two countries is more fragile than it appears, but a shared interest in maintaining stability keeps them as close allies.

The Vanuatu government has not made its position explicitly clear on AUKUS, whether through an official statement or comments to the press. When the initial AUKUS agreement was announced by its Parties, Vanuatu's Climate Change Minister, Ralph Reganvanu, tweeted that Australia's Pacific neighbours that the nuclear submarines would not carry nuclear weapons as per the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (McDonnell,

2023) and the PIF Treaty of Rarotonga 1986 establishing the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone

Treaty of which Australia is party to (United Nations, n.d.). However, after the details of the AUKUS Treaty were announced in March 2023, the Vanuatu Council of Ministers sought advice from security specialists regarding the implications of AUKUS on Vanuatu given its recently signed security agreement and that no prior consultation on AUKUS was provided

to Vanuatu (McDonnell, 2023). The security agreement is subject to parliamentary review and is one of the main reasons for the ousting of Kalsakau as Prime Minister.

Chapter Eight
Analysis

In this chapter, the theoretical frameworks of securitization, security dilemma, entrapment and abandonment will be applied to the relationship between Australia and its development partners, namely Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Fiji Islands, and Vanuatu will be analysed using the data outlined in Chapters 4 to 7 of this research paper. This analysis chapter is divided into two sections corresponding to the research objectives of this research paper. Firstly, to address whether the AUKUS Treaty creates a security dilemma for the South Pacific States, this paper analysed the security alliances or partnerships that each State has established with Australia. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part is an analysis and comparison of the data from the four preceding chapters. In the second section, the security dilemma will be discussed in relation to the Melanesian States, with the main finding in this section being that in entering into security partnerships with Australia, the States are essentially increasing their own national security irrespective of the diverging interests. The third section of this chapter addresses whether the diverging interests would bring about entrapment or abandonment. This section outlines the different approaches that Australia has taken in relation to an incident occurring between the two States. They are not similar events, and thus, the

response to each is different. The political and security implications of the AUKUS Treaty on the South Pacific are discussed within the two sections.

An Analysis of the Data

The Fiji Islands is the only country out of the four Melanesian States that has expressed support for the AUKUS Treaty but only on the understanding that Australia wants to increase its capabilities but does not support any subsequent military buildup or conflict in the Pacific Region. Fiji views Australia's increased military capability as defensive and not offensive. The country has made its 2011 security alliance with China obsolete and has a multitude of security alliances with Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and France. However, Fiji maintains support for China's Belt Road Initiative. Since the change of government from Bainimarama to Rabuka, Fiji has increasingly aligned itself with Australia and the US.

Although Fiji is the only country to express support for AUKUS outright, all four Melanesian states have entered into a bilateral security alliance with Australia. Solomon Islands in 2017, Vanuatu in 2022, Fiji and Papua New Guinea in 2023. Solomon Islands' security pact with Australia is the only alliance that was established before the inception of the AUKUS Treaty. Of the four security pacts, Papua New Guinea has the most extensive cooperation agreement, with Australia being legally binding and allowing the request for assistance in any and all matters concerning peace, stability, and sovereignty.

The Australian security alliance with the Solomon Islands was established in 2017; however, the Solomons entered into a security alliance with China in April 2022. The Solomons' Prime Minister stated that the alliance was predicated on the "Friends to All and Enemies to None" foreign policy of his government and that this alliance complements the alliance his country has with Australia. Australia's security pact with the Solomons is a

replacement for the RAMSI Treaty, and given this shared history, the Alliance with Australia allows for rapid deployment of Australian police and defence on the agreement and further allows third parties to contribute to response. Complementing alliances would mean both countries could intervene in the Solomon Islands at the same time. The Solomons have also stated that they would like to build a national defence force.

The security alliance with Vanuatu stresses that Vanuatu must expedite the approval of any requests by Australia for its vessels or aircraft to enter Vanuatu, including Australian personnel. The alliance goes further to grant the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force powers to use force as it deems necessary to achieve the purpose of the Security Assistance and shall grant personnel immunity in relation to these activities. It is important to note that the alliance has not been ratified by Parliament but has not been nullified either.

Papua New Guinea, Australia's neighbour to the north, has an alliance partnership with Australia that is overshadowed by the US security alliance that was established in 2023 to enhance cooperation and promote democratic values and regional stability. Under the US Alliance, the PNG Defence Force would be strengthened. The agreement further grants the US unimpeded access to six mutually agreed facilities, ports, and airports in Papua New Guinea, including the Australian-developed Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island. These facilities may even be designated for exclusive use by US forces. Additionally, the DCA allows US forces to use these facilities for transits, refuelling, equipment pre-positioning, and force deployment. As is common in such agreements, the US will exercise exclusive criminal jurisdiction over its personnel. Gregoire (2023) argues that the security alliance is militarising PNG by inserting its military into bases and facilities in PNG.

Three of the Melanesian countries (Vanuatu, Solomons and PNG) have not outrightly stated their opposition to AUKUS, but the security alliances entered after the inception of

AUKUS, except for Solomons, demonstrate that they are enhancing their national security by aligning with a more powerful state. Although Fiji has diversified its security partners, it is still oriented to the West and in line with the US and Australia's geo-strategic interests. The Solomon Islands is the only state with a security alliance with China, and in geographical context, the Solomon Islands is the closest country to Papua New Guinea.

The Pacific Islands Forum, in which all four Melanesian states are members, including Australia, stands against AUKUS due to the nuclear proponents of the submarines that go against the 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga (RNZ, 2023). As a region, the Pacific is clear on its stance on AUKUS, but as individual states, the establishment of security alliances contradicts this. The provisions within the alliances allow for assistance to be rendered when required for security purposes, and this fits in with Australia's and the US's interests without requiring the explicit presence or use of the concept of 'Indo-Pacific' in the agreements. If the State was indeed opposing AUKUS, then like Vanuatu, security experts should have been consulted, and additional processes, such as being subject to parliamentary debate, must ensue; however, since the ousting of the Kalsakau Government, the agreement has not been ratified by Parliament.

8.1 Security Dilemma in the South Pacific

As previously articulated in the literature review and methodology chapters of this paper, Chand and Zenel's (2021) extensive coverage of the discourse surrounding the concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' has proven that this region is the referent object that the securitizing actors intend to secure. The AUKUS Treaty is an extraordinary measure taken

by the securitizing actors, the US, Australia, and the UK, to secure the Indo-Pacific region by building up the capabilities of the Pacific's partner, Australia. The Pacific Region is part of the 'Indo-Pacific' construct and is a significant strategic location. this is evidenced by the increased engagement by external powers such as the US, France, and China, aside from Australia and New Zealand, which are also part of the region. A security dilemma then arises for Pacific Island States caught in the geo-strategic competition between China and Australia, and its allies. Also, the national security priorities of these Melanesian States with Australia's competing security priorities. The implications of the security dilemma are outlined below.

A patchwork of Security Alliances

One of the key elements of the security dilemma is assessing the security environment and increasing one's own security in response to this. This is evident here in the Melanesian States; each state has increased their national security by entering into bilateral security agreements primarily with Australia, with the added external States' bilateral security partnerships with Papua New Guinea (the US), Fiji (the US, New Zealand, and France) and the Solomon Islands (China). The security partnerships allow the other states access into their countries on matters of security; although this is not in relation to the competing influence by

China or predicated specifically on the 'Indo-Pacific' concept, it is to reinforce the Melanesian state's national security.

Increased militarization and Instability of the Pacific

A critical component of all the security partnerships with the Melanesian States is the 'rapid deployment', 'expedited' access approval or, in Papua New Guinea's case ', unimpeded access' for the other States' request to enter the Melanesian States' territory on

matters of security. The access is used for police or military personnel and their vessels, which may include any form of transportation. The increased presence of external police or military personnel and their vessels is an increased militarization of the South Pacific. The increased militarisation will destabilise the Pacific region by increasing tensions or the potential for conflict. The increased presence of external personnel may also threaten the sovereignty of the states they request access to and may affect the development of relationships.

This is further demonstrated by the concentration of US and Australian personnel in PNG. Furthermore, the security partnerships between Australia and individual Island States will allow the presence of personnel and vessels in their territorial waters. Due to the broad region of the Indo-Pacific, the Australian Navy can traverse Pacific waters on increased patrols, increasing the presence of the military in Pacific waters.

Increases the need for arms control

The Pacific is a Nuclear Free Zone; however, the bilateral security partnerships do not place arms control on what the other party can bring into the state on matters of security. This is alarming, given the nature of the geo-strategic competition; Melanesian states need to be specific as to what can be brought into the country on matters of security. Papua New Guinea, again, is an illustration of this, with Australia and the United States having unrestricted and uncontrolled access to the country, including no maximum personnel caps and types of arms that can be brought.

Hardening Position of Pacific Islands

Geo-strategic competition would cause difficulties in cooperating with individual actors or as a region. The competing bids for economic cooperation between China's BRI

and Australia and the US's IPEF are examples of this. The patchwork of security

partnership alliances also makes a regional approach to AUKUS and the geo-strategic

competition

difficult.

Challenges National Foreign Policies

Vanuatu, the Fiji Islands and Papua New Guinea are all parties to the Non-

Alignment movement and the Pacific as a whole is premised on the foreign policy of 'friend

to all, enemies to none', and this is enshrined in almost all the National Security Strategies

or policies of the Melanesian states. The security partnerships and increased presence of

external powers in Papua New Guinea challenge or contradict these foreign engagement

policies.

8.2 Entrapment and Abandonment

Entrapment and abandonment for the four Melanesian countries is a complex matter

to consider, given that the relationship between Australia and the Melanesian states is not

only premised on the security alliance but for each country as outlined in the previous

chapters, extensive development programs with Australia being the largest aid development

partner for all four countries. Snyder (1984) has illustrated that in alliances between stronger

and weaker states, the weaker states are heavily dependent on the stronger states because of

the weaker security and diverging interests are not an issue. Aid dependency of a weaker

state in a security alliance adds further complexity when considering entrapment or

abandonment.

Neorealism does not attempt to predict a state's behaviour but instead studies the behaviour of states, and in addressing the objective of this section, the research assesses past incidents involving the states to understand the approaches taken in response to the development partner. Australia's response, as outlined in the preceding chapters, is categorised as follows:

1. Threats to withhold aid

2. Political interference

3. Suspension of diplomatic engagement

4. Reduction of aid
5. Suspension of aid

6. Sanctions; and

7. Approved but prolonged intervention.

As outlined in the last four chapters, the incidents are not the same across the four countries, thereby eliciting different responses each time. Each event had different drivers but ultimately diverging interests. The values of democracy alleged corruption, non-compliance with domestic legislation, and a shifting of diplomatic engagement. Among the Melanesian countries, the longest suspension of diplomatic engagement and aid is with the Fiji Islands due to the coup of 2006. Conversely, Australia's longest engagement in a Melanesian state is RAMSI in the Solomon Islands from 2003 to 2017. It is difficult to gauge how a state would react or behave in relation to an incident; the threat of suspension and actual suspension of diplomatic engagement is a common response by Australia throughout the incidents encompassed in this study.

Entrapment

In establishing bilateral security agreements with Australia, the Melanesian states have allowed for intrusion into their territories for the purposes of security. This becomes potential entrapment if, for example, the geo-strategic competition intensifies, and conflict ensues. The bilateral agreements will allow Australia to enter into their national territories for 'security' purposes with an uncontrolled number of arms. This would bring the conflict to the shores of these nations, thereby dragging or entrapping them into a conflict in which they have no interest but need to participate.

In establishing broad security agreements with the US and Australia, PNG has aligned itself with the security priorities of both these governments. US and Australian personnel, vessels, and aircraft will be mainstays in the six ports and facilities that form part of PNG's defence agreement with the US. PNG is a strategic location for Australia in this geopolitical competition. If it transforms into conflict, having personnel in PNG and not in South Australia would mean that the conflict would not reach Australian shores, but, consequently, this will mean entrapment for PNG, as the outlying base for the US and Australia.

Abandonment

It is then incumbent to consider whether Australia, as the largest aid development partner, would, in the face of intense geostrategic competition, withhold aid to countries that do not share its interests and reallocate this aid to Pacific Island countries who have aligned their security priorities with Australia. For Vanuatu, two incidents were discussed in which the threat of losing aid caused political instability and a government change. On the other hand, one has to consider if Island States would be more amenable to sharing the US's and Australia's security priorities in the face of intense geopolitical competition on the verge of conflict.

Suspending diplomatic engagement and threats to withhold aid pending compliance with Australia's demands were approaches utilized previously by the Australian Government. In the preceding chapters, the aid partnership between each country was detailed. The development aid that Australia provides to these four states is not limited to community programs but is directed towards government ministries as well. The Melanesian states have other development partners that provide development assistance, but Australia's assistance far outweighs these and, in some cases, triples that of other partners, making Australia a significant partner for these states.

The politicisation of aid would mean reducing or removing ultimately aid provided to certain countries and reallocating this aid to other states which Australia would deem more in line with their security priorities in the region. The aid dependency of these states creates a security dilemma, which is the fear of losing out or being abandoned on development aid if they do not align with Australia.

Chapter Nine
Conclusion

This research paper sought to determine whether the AUKUS Treaty presented a security dilemma for the South Pacific and whether the treaty and Australia's divergent security priorities would bring about entrapment or abandonment for the South Pacific. To recap, the research question to be answered was:

> What are the political and security implications of the AUKUS Treaty's securitisation of the South Pacific, the region's relationship with Australia and does the treaty evoke a security dilemma for the South Pacific?

The research paper took on a neorealism lens whilst using the concepts of securitisation, security dilemma, entrapment, and abandonment as the theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the collected data. The data was drawn from a number of documents to triangulate and corroborate the information collected, but most notably, Australia's development partnership agreements, national security policies, foreign policy papers, security partnerships, defence agreements and treaties.

This research paper was based on the study completed by Chand and Zenel (2021), who argued the role of securitisation in region-making, assessed the critical discourse around key security actors that securitized the region of 'Indo-Pacific' of which the South Pacific is a part of. The AUKUS Treaty was an extraordinary measure taken by the security actors, Australia, the US, and the UK. With this premise in mind, the key arguments made in this paper are:

1. AUKUS does present a security dilemma for the South Pacific

The AUKUS creates a security dilemma for the Melanesian Island states in this research as they are placed in a difficult position of being between Australia's competing security interests and their own national security concerns. Australia's security interests are aligned with that of the United States, specifically, the Indo-Pacific region, which is a concept based on security cooperation aimed at the containment of China and its influence in the region. In increasing geo-strategic competition, Melanesian States have continued to enter into security partnership agreements not only with their traditional security partner, Australia but with external States as well, such as China, the US and France. By entering into security alliances with stronger states, the Melanesian states are increasing their own national security.

2. Entrapment or Abandonment of the Pacific

The security dilemma of Melanesian states and, ultimately, Pacific Island States is further complex by the fact that the leading security partner in the regions, Australia, is also the largest bilateral donor of the region with extensive development programs implemented within the region. In studying the past behaviour between Australia and each Melanesian state, this research was able to identify that the threat or suspension development aid is a key approach used by Australia towards Melanesian states when their interests did not align. In using its aid to force compliance previously, the region is therefore vulnerable to the potential of aid politicisation to align with Australia's strategic interests. This would be the reduction of aid support and development programs and the reallocation of aid to countries that Australia deems more aligned with its geopolitical interests.

The Security alliances have allowed for the militarization of the islands, and this is evident in the case of Papua New Guinea, which entered into security partnerships with both Australia and the United States. The presence of Australian and United States personnel and

vessels is increasing on the islands, which are now basically an outlying base of the two countries within the Pacific, acting as a barrier to having a conflict reach Australian shores. As Papua New Guinea is the location in a conflict, the country would be entrapped, as in being forced into the conflict. This is similar to other Melanesian States with security partnerships with Australia that allow either 'rapid deployment' or 'expedited' access approval.

Thus, the AUKUS Treaty creates a security dilemma for the Pacific Islands with the potential for entrapment and abandonment of the Island States.

This research builds on Snyder's arguments on alliance politics in adding another layer of complexity to the alliance to include not only considerations of national security but the aid dependency relationship between the two countries. It is essential to understand the complex relationship between two countries with security partnerships and extensive development aid programs, specifically where the security priorities do not align. The asymmetrical relationship has various social and political implications for not only the weaker state that is dependent on the aid provided by the stronger state in the alliance.

In undertaking this research, one of the key limitations was the limited academic literature available on the topic, which is understandably so due to the geographic focus of this research and the contemporary nature of the topic. However, this does allow for more opportunities to complete academic research on the Pacific and the role that it plays in global power politics specific to the concept of Indo-Pacific.

The contemporary geopolitical landscape in the South Pacific is dynamic and principally influenced or affected by external powers. The introduction of the 'Indo-Pacific' as a security cooperation further complicates the geopolitics of the South Pacific. Within

that, the intricate relationships between aid partners, security alliances, regional institutions and external powers make for an exciting research project.

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